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ON

THE NEW TESTAMENT

BY AMERICAN AND ENGLISH SCHOLARS OF VARIOUS EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS

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IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. IV

The Catholic Epistles and Revelation

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INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

I. THE AUTHORSHIP.—II. THE ARGUMENT.

THE authorship and the argument of this Epistle are questions of peculiar interest. The argument creates no special difficulty; the authorship has given rise to much discussion. The whole question indeed is specially deserving of attention, and we may be excused for giving space to it.

(1) Was the Epistle written by Apollos? In commenting on Gen. xlviii. 20, Luther says incidentally: 'The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, whoever he was, whether Paul, or, as I think, Apollos.' This opinion he repeats in his sermon on 1 Cor. iii. 4, suggesting that from the eloquence of Apollos, his knowledge of the Scriptures, and the general esteem in which he was held in the early Church, he was competent to write it. The opinion therefore first appeared in the sixteenth century,[1] and now numbers amongst its adherents Tholuck, Alford, and others, all of whom are dissatisfied with the evidence of the common theory that it was written by Paul, and all concur in accepting a theory which is without any external evidence whatever. To maintain that Apollos might have written it is just enough; but to maintain that he did write it, or that he probably did, on the grounds assigned, is to overlook some of the first principles of historical investigation.[2]

But not only is there no proof; there are several serious objections to the theory itself. Apollos was a Christian Jew of Alexandria (Acts xviii. 24). He had many devoted adherents among the early Christians (1 Cor. i. 12), and shared their attachment even with Paul himself. It is also clear from the Epistle that the author was

[1] Though this was Luther's opinion, it was not shared by his colleagues. Calvin, indeed, supposed that Luke might have written it, or Clement; but Beza and the other reformers maintained its Pauline origin; and in 1658 the younger Spanheim wrote an elaborate treatise on the whole subject, examining the external and internal evidence, and showing that Paul was probably the writer, and that he had the very qualities of which the Alexandrian scholars were proud.

[2] The two internal arguments upon which Dean Alford insists to prove that the Epistle was written by Apollos, are—(1) That it is said of Apollos he began to speak 'boldly' (παρρησιάζεσθαι), Acts xviii. 26; and therefore it was very likely he should tell the Hebrews not to cast away their παρρησίαν, x. 35. And yet this is the very thing which Barnabas tells us Paul did (Acts ix. 27) in Damascus; the very thing he did in Jerusalem (Acts ix. 29); the very thing he did in company with Barnabas at Antioch in his last address to the Jews before turning to the Gentiles (xiii. 46); the very thing he did for three whole months at Ephesus (xix. 8); the very thing he did before Agrippa (xxvi. 26), and at Rome, where he preached for two whole years 'with all boldness.' Once the description is used of Apollos, seven times in the Acts it is used of Paul. Four times this boldness is commended in the Hebrews, and ten times by Paul in other Epistles which are confessedly his. The idea is intensely Pauline. (2) The second proof is, that when Apollos first met Aquila and Priscilla, he knew only the Baptism of John, and therefore he was well qualified, says Alford, to speak of baptism as the foundation of the Christian life; but so was any baptized Jew, and Paul as much as any.

known to his friends (cf. xiii. 18, 19, 23); and yet we are required to believe that the secret was so kept that it was never guessed till the sixteenth century, and that the church at Alexandria, the most learned church in Christendom, with a school (founded, it is said, by Mark, who was certainly pastor there) which sent forth a succession of men eminent for their erudition and research, allowed a distinguished Alexandrine teacher to be despoiled of his honour, and uniformly ascribed the authorship (as we shall see) to another. Apollos *may* have been the author, that is, he was learned and eloquent enough to write it; but the fact, if fact it be, is absolutely without evidence, and is on other grounds highly improbable.

(2) Was it written by Barnabas? The chief argument in favour of this theory is the statement of Tertullian (about 220), and the theory itself has been supported by Ullmann and Wieseler. 'There is extant' (says Tertullian) 'an Epistle to the Hebrews under the name of Barnabas, a man,' he adds, 'sufficiently authorized by God, inasmuch as Paul associated him with himself in maintaining the doctrine of self-denial' (namely, that he declined wages for preaching); 'and verily,' he adds, 'this Epistle of Barnabas is more generally received among the churches than the apocryphal Pastor' (the Shepherd of Hermas, whom he supposes to be too lax in his views and discipline). He then quotes Heb. vi. 4–8, and adds: 'The men who received this doctrine from the Apostles, and taught it with them, had never learned that a second repentance was promised by the Apostles to adulterers and fornicators.' This seems strong testimony, and is the stronger from the fact that if Tertullian had supposed that the Epistle could have been attributed to Paul, he would have attributed it to him so as to gain for his views on the non-restoration of the fallen the greater authority.

But on the other hand, when Tertullian lived it is now known that there was no Christian Latin literature (see Wordsworth on *Hippolytus and the Church at Rome*), so that his opinion on a literary question is not entitled to great weight. It never gained acceptance in Christendom. It was not received in Cyprus, the country of Barnabas. Epiphanius (A.D. 367), Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, knows nothing of it, and ascribes the Epistle to Paul. In Africa, the country of Tertullian, it was not received. The greatest African writers, Augustine and Athanasius, ascribe it to Paul, as do the African Councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (419).

Besides, if Barnabas had written the Epistle, *he* would naturally have prefixed his name to it. Barnabas took part with Peter at Antioch in the debate concerning the ceremonial law (Gal. ii. 13), and his name would have commended any Epistle to all Hebrew Christians, as did the names of Peter and James. And further, it is a constant tradition that Barnabas wrote ONE Epistle, and that Epistle is expressly stated by Eusebius and Jerome not to form part of the Canonical Scriptures. Whether it be the same Epistle as is now known by his name, is doubtful. If it be nis, no one can doubt that the acknowledged Epistle of Barnabas is in all respects a very different composition from the Epistle to the Hebrews; and it is certain that the *one* Epistle which the ancient Church attributed to Barnabas is not the Epistle to the Hebrews which both Eusebius and Jerome place in the Canon.

How Tertullian's opinion originated it is impossible to say, but the phraseology he employs is very peculiar, and may suggest an explanation. Instead of speaking of the Epistle of Barnabas, he speaks of the 'titulus Barnabæ,' a book with the name of Barnabas upon it as an inscription. It is very possible he may have had a volume inscribed 'Barnabæ' containing the Epistle of Barnabas and the nameless Epistle to the Hebrews. It was not uncommon in ancient times to bind together compositions of different authors. The Epistle of Clement is now appended in this

way to the Alexandrine MS., as is the Epistle of Barnabas to the Sinaitic, and so, curiously enough, is the Epistle of Barnabas to one of the oldest MSS. of Tertullian. Some of the most remarkable discoveries of modern times—by Cureton, for example—have been made by the examination of different works bound up under one name.

(3) Was it written by Clement, Paul's fellow-labourer (Phil. iv. 3), afterwards Bishop at Rome? The ancient testimonies on this question, Origen (220), Eusebius (330), and Jerome (380), say only that some persons were of opinion that the language of the Epistle was from him, and that the substance was Paul's: either he clothed the thoughts of the apostle in the dress they wear, or he translated it out of the Hebrew. That he was the author of the Epistle is an opinion maintained by no ancient authority.

In fact, Clement has frequently quoted from the Epistle in his own Epistle to the Corinthians, written it is generally admitted twenty or thirty years later, and quoted it with passages taken from Holy Scripture.[1] Of course he would hardly have made those quotations if he had been himself the author. His own Epistle, moreover, addressed to the Church at Corinth, and intended to allay the spirit of division that prevailed then, is a good specimen of early Christian writing, but it is very different, as any one may see, from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

(4) Was it written by Luke? Here again the question has to do only with the form; no ancient writer ascribing anything to him but the words; the form, and not the substance. The reason for this supposition is that the style is thought to be unlike Paul's and to be like Luke's. This question we shall look at by and by. Meanwhile, note that Luke was not of Hebrew origin, nor was he probably even a Hellenistic Jew. Eusebius and Jerome speak of him as a Gentile Christian, and as a native of Antioch, the capital of Syria, and the country of Gentile Christianity. It is hardly likely that a Gentile or even a Hellenistic Jew would have written an Epistle to Hebrews. If Luke had written it, the fact would have been known to the Christians of Syria and Asia, and to the Church at Antioch; and yet the Bishops assembled at that city in 269 to examine the teaching of Paul of Samosata who was bishop there, quote the Epistle (Heb. iv. 15, xi. 26. See Routh's *Rel.* iii. 298, 299), and expressly ascribe it, not to Luke, but to Paul.

(5) Was it written by Paul? In considering this question, the canonical authority may also be settled, and the subordinate question, Is the language Paul's, or only the thoughts, or both? And it may be convenient to divide the question into two—the external testimony, and the internal evidence.

[1] Alford objects that Clement does not say when quoting the Hebrews that it is Scripture he is quoting, and certainly he does not say that it is from Paul he quotes, and hence Alford concludes Clement's quotations do not prove the Pauline origin of the book, nor even its Divine authority; but this statement is only half the truth, and it really misleads. The fact is, that he quotes the Hebrews as he generally quotes Paul's Epistles. He quotes Romans, Ephesians, 1 Tim. and Titus, and never speaks of Paul's name in connection with any of them, nor does he introduce the quotations with any reference to their inspired authority. Once he does refer to the Corinthians as the Epistle of the blessed Paul, but this is a single case. No Apostolic Father has quoted so largely from the New Testament as Polycarp. In nine pages of his Epistle to the Philippians he has quoted forty-five passages, but only once does he mention a name (Paul's) in connection with his quotations (chap. xi.); nowhere is there any mark of quotation or formal acknowledgment of the Divine authority of the passage he is quoting; nor is there any example of a quotation from the New Testament with the formula common in citing from the Old Testament, 'It is written,' earlier than the Epistle of Barnabas, which was written subsequent to A.D. 130 (see *Ante-Nicene Apostolic Fathers*, p. 107). The fact is, that if Clement had known Paul to be the author, and had meant to quote the book as authoritative, he would not have quoted it in any other way. The true conclusion is that he did regard it as authoritative, for he quotes it to settle religious questions. Whether he regarded Paul as the author no one can say on either side.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was no doubt written during Paul's lifetime. It speaks throughout of the Temple as still standing, and of the Temple worship as still going on. This is the natural meaning of the perfect tense throughout, as most of the Greek commentators note; and though it warns the readers of the doom hanging over Jerusalem (x. 25), there is nothing to indicate that the war waged by Vespasian and Titus had yet commenced.

This war began in the reign of Nero, and Paul was martyred in the last year of the Emperor's life (see Pearson, A.D. 60–67, and Clinton's *Fasti Romani*, 44–48). Therefore Paul was alive when the Epistle was written. Since also the writer promises to visit the Hebrews with Timothy (Heb. xiii. 23), it would seem to have been written before Timothy settled at Ephesus, an event that is said to have taken place some time before Paul's own martyrdom. This is the old tradition, and agrees with the general tenor of the Epistle. This mention of 'Timothy my brother' has been thought by some to be sufficient to identify the author with Paul, for Paul often joins Timothy with himself in the addresses of his Epistles (Phil. i.; 1 Thess. i.; 2 Thess. i.), speaks of him as his workfellow (Rom. xvi. 21), and three times as his brother (2 Cor. i.; Col. i.; Phil. i.); nor is Timothy ever so called by any other writer of Holy Scripture.

Why Paul should write to Hebrews, and why he should omit his name, are questions that belong more naturally to the division of Internal Evidence; but I may note here that it was no part of the writer's purpose to remain concealed. Those to whom the Epistle is addressed knew the name of the writer (Heb. xiii. 22). Alford indeed maintains that, besides the omission of the name, the Epistle is wanting in that authorization which he says Paul affirms is found in every Epistle of his—the message written in his own hand—'The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is a token in every Epistle: so I write' (2 Thess. iii. 17). But surely this is a mistake. The authorization is there. In all the thirteen acknowledged Epistles of Paul, the authorization is added: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.' This is the authorization he everywhere sends. These words formed the token by which his Epistles were known. No such close is found in any other New Testament Epistle written in Paul's lifetime. Thirty years later Clement used it in his Epistle to the Corinthians, as thirty years later John also used it in the Revelation; but in the Epistles it is used by Paul alone, and it is found at the close of the Hebrews. Whether this reasoning be admitted or not, it is clear from the Epistle that the writer was known to those whom he specially addressed.

To whom then did Paul write? To believing Hebrews certainly. Whether to Hebrews in Galatia, in Thessalonica, in Corinth, in Asia Minor, or in Palestine, critics do not agree. Most have held, as nearly all the ancient churches held, that it was written to Hebrews in Palestine. Alford thinks that it was written to Hebrews in Rome. To believing Hebrews at all events it was written.

The Second Epistle of Peter was written a short time before the death of that Apostle, as most hold, later than the Epistle to the Hebrews. It was addressed by him, like the first Epistle, to the Hebrew converts in the East. In that Epistle, which was written about a year and a half after the first, and about the same time after what we have supposed to be the date of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle speaks of an Epistle written by Paul, and written by Paul to Hebrews, 'as our beloved brother Paul according to the wisdom given unto him hath written to YOU; as also in all his Epistles.' Hence, it has been said, Paul wrote to the Hebrews, and he wrote to the Hebrews in a distinct Epistle, and Peter claims for the whole inspired authority—'which the unstable and unteachable wrest, as they do

the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.' Several competent scholars [Pearson (*Opera Posth. Diss.* i. p. 59) and Wordsworth] have regarded this language as a distinct inspired testimony to the authorship and claims of this Epistle. Even if 2 Pet. be of later date, it gives early testimony to the authorship of the Hebrews.

Before proceeding to give other testimonies, it may be worth while just to notice the testimony of the Apostolic Fathers, as they have been called. This testimony has increased of late years through the discovery of fragments of their works, and though those fragments are not all certainly genuine, the preponderance of evidence in favour of their genuineness is considerable, and the fragments are, at all events, of great antiquity.

Clement's quotations are not new. His Epistle was written, it is said, in A.D. 68, or, as most hold, in 97. He quotes Heb. i. 3–7, xi. 5, 37, etc., xii. 1, and probably iii. 2, 5, vi. 18, x. 37, etc. The passages may be seen side by side in Jacobson's edition of the *Patres Apostolici;* in Stuart's *Epistle to the Hebrews*, i. 77, 94; in Forster's *Apostolical Authority of the Hebrews*, sec. 13. The passages are quoted as passages from Scripture, and are generally quoted by Clement without any indication of quotation, and without any name. They are proofs of the existence of the Epistle, and of its authority. His silence as to the authorship has been differently interpreted. If he knew the author, and knew his reason for not giving his name, it was natural he should not assign it to Paul. Besides these quotations, it may be added that the allusions to the Epistle are so numerous that Dr. Westcott says, it is not too much to affirm that the Epistle must have transfused itself into Clement's mind.

Ignatius has not generally been reckoned among the writers who quote the Epistle, but in two of the Ignatian Epistles which are generally regarded as genuine, which exist in Syriac and have been published by Cureton, he quotes as Scripture x. 29, and especially xiii. 17. These letters were written between 107 and 120 (see *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 190, 250).

Barnabas (130–150) quotes iii. 5; and though this may be a quotation from the Old Testament, the argument of his Epistle touches upon many questions which are discussed in the Hebrews (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, p. 126).[1]

Polycarp, the teacher of Irenæus, and the disciple of John, quotes it (see Routh, *Opusc. Eccl.* i. p. 24). He wrote probably about 150.

Irenæus (130–200) is described by Alford as not quoting the Epistle, but in fact he quotes two passages at least, i. 3 and xiii. 15, ascribing the last passage by name to Paul. This last quotation is found in one of the recent fragments of Irenæus (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, i. 238 and 176). For an account of those fragments, see i. p. 20 of the same series. Many of his writings, it may be added, have been lost.

Justin Martyr (103–147) is one of the early Apologists. He was of Greek descent, and resided near Sichem. He reasoned with Jews at Ephesus, and taught the Gospel at Rome. He quotes from several Epistles, and from the Hebrews (i. 9, xiii. 8, 7). The passages may be seen in Westcott, p. 147.[2]

[1] The Epistle of Barnabas contains thirty-five pages and twenty-one chapters. No one ascribed it to the Barnabas of the New Testament till the days of Clement of Alexandria; and Eusebius reckons it among the non-canonical books. But there is very good reason for regarding it as belonging to the middle of the second century. By the discovery of the Cod. Sin. the whole Epistle is now known in Greek. Previously we had only a Latin translation of part of it. It discusses the meaning of the Jewish sacrifices, the near approach of Antichrist, the New Covenant as founded on the sufferings of Christ, the spiritual significance of the Ancient Law, and the abrogation of the Ceremonial Law. Every chapter may be paralleled from one or other of the Gospels or of the Epistles, and yet the New Testament is never quoted except twice.

[2] It is not creditable to our English scholarship that it should be said that Justin Martyr never quoted from the writings of St. Paul. German editions of his works give some fifty passages which are quoted really from Paul's writings.

Considering that two at least of these Apostolic Fathers (Clement and Irenæus) were Westerns, and resided in a district where the Epistle was least known, the amount of testimony is really considerable, and is much more than has been hitherto supposed.

The other testimonies to the authorship of the Epistle are divided into those of general or local Councils, of members of the Eastern Churches, viz. in Palestine, Syria, Alexandria, Asia Minor, and Constantinople, and those of the Western Churches including Africa.

The earliest Council is that held at Antioch A.D. 269, which quotes the Epistle as Paul's (see Routh, iii. 298). The second is the Council of Nice (A.D. 325), where it was received as the production of Paul (Wordsworth's *Introduction*, p. 365). The third is the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 363), where it was decided that the uncanonical books are not to be read in the churches, but only the following: Genesis . . ., etc. . . . Paul's fourteen Epistles (Westcott, p. 483). The fourth is the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397), where it was ordered that none but the canonical Scriptures should be read in the churches, and among those are 'the thirteen Epistles of Paul, and also the Epistle of the same to the Hebrews.' In the next council held at Carthage twenty years later (A.D. 419), they are called 'the fourteen Epistles of Paul' simply; and so the phrase goes in later Councils.

If the Epistle was addressed to believing Hebrews at Jerusalem,—the common view,—we may begin our testimonies with Cyril, who was bishop in that city. He wrote his *Catechetical Lectures* in 349, and gives the names of the books of the two Testaments. Among them he recites the fourteen Epistles of Paul, affirming that the books themselves were delivered by apostles and primitive bishops (Westcott, p. 491).

In the same century *Jerome* was living at Bethlehem. He had come from Rome to fit himself for translating the Scriptures into his own tongue, and brought with him the prejudice of the Latin Church of his age against the Epistle and its translations, a prejudice that was occasioned in part by the fact that the doctrines of the Montanist Novatian teachers in the West concerning the renewing of the fallen to repentance were grounded on their interpretation of the early verses of the sixth chapter of the Hebrews. He states that it was received as Paul's by all the churches of the East, and by all previous Greek-Christian writers. Though many attributed it to Barnabas or to Clement, he adds, that he himself receives it as Paul's, but thinks the question of authorship a small one, since the book itself is read every day in public reading (*Epist. ad Dardanum*, Words. p. 31). Elsewhere (*de Vir. Illust.* p. 30) he says that the style created difficulty, and that some therefore thought that while the Sententiæ were Paul's, Barnabas, or Clement, or Luke had arranged and written them in his own style (Words. p. 30; Delitzsch, p. 12). There are several smaller mistakes in this statement, which, however, we need not notice.

Eusebius was Bishop of Cæsarea (A.D. 340), the town where Paul was for two years confined. He says that the 'fourteen Epistles of Paul are manifest and evident' (*E. H.* iii. 3), and elsewhere states that he is disposed to think that the substance of the Epistle is Paul's, but the diction from another hand, Clement's (*E. H.* iii. 38; Words. *Introduction*, p. 364; and Del. p. 10). Elsewhere he reckons it among the Homologoumena (iii. 25), and quotes it as Paul's (Words. *Introduction*). His testimony is the more important, because he was inclined to favour the Arians. 'If,' says *Theodoret*, Bishop of Cyprus (393), 'the Arians are not willing to listen to *us* concerning the benefits which the Church has received from the Epistle to the Hebrews, let them listen to Eusebius of Palestine, to whom they appeal as an advocate of their own dogmas; for Eusebius admits that this Epistle is the work of the Divine apostle, and

that *all the ancients* entertained this opinion concerning the authorship of it' (Procem. to his *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*).

Besides these Palestine authorities, Gregory Thaumaturgus (Bishop of Cæsarea, A.D. 212–270) is now quoted by Cardinal Mai as assigning it to Paul, as does Basil the Great, Bishop of the same place (A.D. 371–380). Chrysostom (A.D. 347–407), Bishop of Antioch, and afterwards at Constantinople, speaks of the fourteen Epistles of Paul. Herein also Epiphanius (A.D. 367) of Cyprus, Theodoret of Cyrus, Gregory of Nyssa (A.D. 332–396) all agree.

In Asia Minor, Gregory of Nazienzum (A.D. 391) reckons among the 'God-inspired writings' 'the fourteen Epistles of Paul.' Amphilochius (A.D. 380), Bishop of Iconium, puts his reasons into verse, and reckons among the words of truth and inspired Scriptures the twice seven Epistles of Paul. Some, adds he, say that the Epistle to the Hebrews is spurious, *οὐκ εὖ λέγοντες, γνησία γὰρ ἡ χάρις*. So says also Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia (A.D. 394), and a hundred and twenty years earlier Archelaus, Bishop of Cashara in Mesopotamia (A.D. 278), in his controversy with Manes, quotes Heb. i. 3 and iii. 5, 6. The passages may be seen in Routh, v. 127–149. The testimony of Ephrem of Syria (A.D. 439) and of Severian Bishop of Galata in Syria may be seen in Lardner, II. 482, 620.

As yet I have said nothing of Alexandrian writers. The church in that city was of primitive origin. It is said to have been founded by Mark, who was with Paul in his first imprisonment at Rome (Col. iv. 10; Philem. 24), and perhaps also at his martyrdom (2 Tim. iv. 11). The church was also distinguished by the ability of its pastors, and Jerome says that the Catechetical school there began *a Marco Evangelista*. One of the chief teachers of the school, a presbyter of the church, was Pantænus (A.D 155–216), the teacher of Clement of Alexandria (see Routh, i. 376). He ascribes the book to Paul, and gives reasons why the apostle omits his name (West. p. 309; see Delitzsch, p. 8). Clement (A.D. 220) of Alexandria taught (according to the summary of his Hypotyposes or Outlines as given by Eusebius) that the Epistle to the Hebrews is Paul's written in Hebrew, and that Luke, having carefully (*φιλοτιμως*) translated it, published it for the use of the Greeks. Hence, he adds, the similarity of colouring (*χρῶτα*) between this Epistle and the Book of Acts. In his *Adumbrationes* (Comments on the Canonical Epistles) he expressly assigns the Hebrews to Paul, adding that Luke translated it. He regularly quotes it in the *Stromata* as Paul's (West. p. 311; Words. p. 365).

Origen, a pupil of Clement's, holds substantially the same view. See Wordsworth's translation of the passage 'on the Can.,' p. 237, and Stuart, i. p. 127. The meaning of this passage has been questioned, and Alford quotes it as affirming that no one can know who wrote the Epistle; but not only does the passage itself correct this rendering, the rendering is contradicted by two facts. First, after writing this passage, Origen always quotes the Epistle as Paul's, or as the apostle's (see Stuart, i. 133). Secondly, in a passage given by Westcott as containing Origen's mature judgment on the Epistle, he says (A.D. 240) that he has written elsewhere 'to show that the Epistle is Paul's' (West. p. 318).

These facts are important. They show that in the second and third centuries there was a uniform and constant tradition at Alexandria that the SUBSTANCE of the Epistle was Paul's, and that there was a difference of opinion as to the person who reduced the Epistle to writing. Pantænus gives no hint that the diction had one author and the matter another. Clement suggests a Hebrew original and a Greek translation. Origen differs from his master, and suggests that Paul arranged the materials and another wrote, Clement or Luke. The discrepancy shows how all

agreed as to the substance; and in all the subsequent testimony at Alexandria, the distinction between substance and language ceases. Hence Dionysius of Alexandria (A.D. 247) ascribes the Epistle to Paul (Delit. p. 10; Words. p. 366); as does Peter, a celebrated Bishop of that city (A.D. 300) (see Routh, iv. p. 35), and his successor Alexander (A.D. 313) (see passage in West. 319; Lardn. ii. 302); and so, finally, do the two great leaders in that city, Athanasius (A.D. 373) and Cyril (A.D. 412). The passages may be seen in Lardner, ii. 400, 401, iii. 9; and a confirmation of the statement may be seen in a recently published Catena of Dr. Cramer (A.D. 1844), in which Cyril, Athanasius, and others all speak of the Hebrew as Paul's.

It may be added, to complete this Eastern testimony, that nearly all the most ancient Greek MSS. place the Epistle to the Hebrews among Paul's Epistles,[1] not *after* the Pastoral Epistles as is done by the Vulgate, and in the A. V., but before them. In the Alex., the Sinaitic, the Vat., the Cod. Eph., the Codex Coislianus, in several ancient Cursive MSS. (see Tisch. *N. T.*, ed. 1858, p. 555), and in older MSS. still, the Epistle to the Hebrews is placed immediately after the Epistle to the Galatians, and before that to the Ephesians. This fact appears from the present numerals of the sections in the Vat. (see Cardinal Mai's note, p. 429). In the most ancient Sahidic version it is inserted *before* the Epistle to the Galatians.

It may be added, as bearing upon the question of canonicity, that the Epistle is found in the earliest versions of the New Testament, the Syriac, and the old Italic; and those versions were made as early as the end of the second century at latest, or about a hundred and thirty years after the Epistle was written.

While the evidence of the Eastern Churches (Palestinian, Syrian, Arabic, Alexandrian, the last half Latin and half Syrian or Greek) is thus decided, the evidence of the Western Church is in a very different position. The history of the Epistle in this respect is the very opposite of that of the Book of Revelation. That book was received unanimously by the Western Church, and questioned in the East. The Hebrews, on the contrary, was received unanimously in the East, and questioned in the West. The amount and value of this Western questioning we now proceed to discuss.

Here again I may remark the question has been unfairly represented, either by inadvertence upon the part of readers, or by forgetfulness of facts upon the part of writers.

Dr. Westcott, for example, says of Cyprian that he makes no reference to the Epistle, and that he implicitly denies that the work is Paul's (p. 325). In the same way Victorinus is quoted as rejecting it. The grounds for these statements are—(1) that Cyprian does not quote the Epistle, and (2) that he speaks of Paul's Epistles to Seven Churches only. So also in the case of Victorinus. To the first reason I reply that Cyprian quotes comparatively little from the New Testament, that there are several other Epistles not quoted from, and that in fact he does quote from Heb. xii. 6 (see *Works*, p. 30). As to Victorinus, nothing remains of his but a brief fragment of half-a-dozen pages of a commentary on Genesis apparently, entitled, 'On the making of the World' (Routh, iii. 455). In those fragments he refers to only six books of the New Testament, and his non-quotation from the Hebrews proves nothing. The second argument is, that both writers speak of Paul's letters to seven churches only, and of course, it is concluded, the Hebrews is not included among them. The statement of both is in substance:—Behold the seven horns of the Lamb, the seven eyes of God, the seven spirits before the Throne, the seven lamps, the seven candlesticks, the seven women in Isaiah, the seven deacons, the seven trumpets, the

[1] On the other hand, the Cod. Clar. reckons the Epistle as canonical, but speaks of it as the Epistle of Barnabas. This is an African MS. of the eighth century.

seven angels who sounded, the seven seals which were broken, the seven pairs which Noah took into the ark, the sevenfold vengeance promised to Cain, the seven pillars of the house of Wisdom of which Solomon speaks, and of course the seven churches to whom John wrote, and the seven churches of Paul (*apud* Paulum). Each writer is commenting upon the number of seven, its significance, and its completeness, and on the impossibility of there being more than the four Gospels, and seven Epistles to as many churches. Now, in fact, Paul did write to seven churches only, as John did, but the very place of the Epistle to the Hebrews, standing as it does among the Catholic Epistles, and after the Epistles to particular churches, shows that it was regarded, not as an Epistle to a Church, but to Hebrew believers; and the *implicit* denial, as it has been called, of the Pauline authorship based on these facts, is really without foundation. Perhaps the favourite theory may be saved, and no dishonour be done to any Epistle by the later discovery of more than one Father that there are Epistles to seven churches, and that Paul wrote twice seven Epistles in all, including the Hebrews! Of course I am not quoting Cyprian or Victorinus as saying anything in favour of the Epistle, except that Cyprian once quotes it. I only affirm that their authority against it amounts really to nothing.[1]

Another similar statement is, that no Latin Father before Hilary (A.D. 368) quotes the Epistle as Paul's (West. p. 331). This statement may sound startling, but it really amounts to very little. There is no Latin Father before Hilary to quote it. Clement, as we have seen, quotes the Epistle, as he quotes most of the Epistles, without mentioning the author; but he is not properly a Latin Father. Tertullian quotes and speaks of it as a book included under the title of Barnabas; and he is rather to be reckoned a heretic Father of the North African Church, as he certainly was when he wrote the treatise *De Pudicitia*, in which the Epistle is quoted. Apollonius and Victor are Latin Fathers, but they have left no works behind them. Minucius Felix is the only author of any note before Tertullian. He wrote *Octavius*, a book on Evidences, but, like most of the books of the early Apologists, it contains no quotations from the Christian Scriptures; while the Letters of Cornelius given in Cyprian quote only one passage out of the whole of the New Testament (Matt. v. 8). The Latin literature of the first three centuries is, in fact, exceedingly scanty, and what we have supplies little or no evidence in the way of quotation upon the question of the Canon at all. It may be worth noticing, after these sweeping statements about Hilary, that the Epistle to the Hebrews had been translated into Latin, and had received its place among the Latin Scriptures a hundred years at least before Hilary's day.

Among Western writers who were not Latin Fathers, however, are Irenæus and Hippolytus. The former was Bishop at Lyons, and though he is mentioned as not having quoted the Epistle, he has really quoted it, and according to the Pfaffian fragments has ascribed it to Paul. As to Hippolytus, who was Bishop at Portus Romanus, we have fragments only of his works, though they are considerable. His Refutation of all Heresies fills a volume in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, and it may be said that though perhaps he does not quote the Epistle, in three passages he quotes remarkable Old Testament passages which are quoted in the Hebrews: 'Our God is a consuming fire,' for example; and, 'The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent.' At the same time much cannot be made of his silence. His quotations from the New Testament are, considering his subject, exceedingly few,—not more, I suppose, than

[1] This is the more clear when it is remembered that ten years after the death of Victorinus the Council of Hippo (A.D. 393), and then the Council of Carthage, placed this very book among the canonical Scriptures under the title of 'The Divine Writings' (see West. p. 483).

80 in 500 pages; and he gives no quotations from the First of John and Philemon (Westcott). His quotations, it may be added, are not always distinguishable from his own composition.

But though no importance is to be attached to the silence of Latin writers, there are two or three testimonies in relation to the Epistle which deserve special attention. Eusebius states that Caius, an ecclesiastical man, as he calls him, and of great reasoning power (λογικωτατος), mentions only thirteen Epistles of Paul, not enumerating the Hebrews with the other Epistles, and he intimates that he does this in a treatise against Montanism. This Caius was a presbyter of Rome, and flourished (about A.D. 196) towards the end of the second century (Eus. vi. 20; Words. 367).

There is a similar omission in the Muratorian Canon, as it is called, a list of the canonical books of Scripture belonging probably to the latter part of the second century, and ascribed by some to this Caius. The manuscript which contains that canon was written in the eighth century, and is a Latin translation from the Greek, as is proved by the Græcisms of the style. It is most carelessly written, and there are several lacunæ in the MSS. If this is the authority to which Eusebius refers, it partly corroborates his statement, though in fact it merely says that Paul writes to no more than seven churches by name, and shows 'by this sevenfold writing that there is only one Church spread abroad through the whole world' (see *Ante-Nicene Fragments*, p. 161). If this Muratorian fragment was not by Caius, then it is an additional confirmation of the statement of Caius. It illustrates very well how the canon was now taking a definite form. It detracts from the value of the document that it does not contain the First Epistle of John, and that the Epistle of James and one Epistle of Peter are omitted.

A hundred and fifty years later (A.D. 380), Philastrius, Bishop of Brescia, and a friend of Ambrose of Milan, speaks of some heretics who say that Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews was not written by him, but is either by Barnabas the Apostle, or by Clement, while others say that it is Luke's. There is also an Epistle written to the Laodicæans, and because in it are certain things of which they do not think well, therefore it is not read in the church. 'Though it is read by some, it is not read in the church to the people, but only the thirteen Epistles of Paul and occasionally the Epistle to the Hebrews. They think it not Paul's because the author has written in a rhetorical style, and because it speaks of Christ as *man* (iii. 3); therefore it is not read as well as because of what it says on the impossibility of restoring the fallen (vi. 4), a passage that might favour the Novatians' (Words. p. 16). Here he ascribes the opinion to heretics, though he says also that the Epistle was not commonly read in the churches.

These two authorities (Caius and Philastrius) are confirmed by the language of Jerome. He says that the Epistle was received as canonical by all the churches of the East, and by all early Greek Christian writers, though some ascribed it to Barnabas and others to Clement, while they read it in their churches nevertheless. He adds that the *Latinorum Consuetudo* did not regard it as canonical, just as the *Græcorum Consuetudo* did not regard the Revelation as canonical; and yet, he continues, we receive both as canonical, following herein the authority of ancient writers (Westcott, p. 403).

How the Epistle got this repute at Rome it is not difficult in some measure to explain. Let me repeat that there was a very scanty literature, and very little knowledge of theology or Scripture, at Rome during those early centuries, that the Roman Church up to the time of Augustine always admitted fewer canonical books than the Eastern, that in the ancient Latin lists just named the Epistles to Jews are all

omitted (Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter), and we have some explanation of the facts. It may be added that the great controversy in Italy in the first century was in relation to Montanism and Novatianism, both heresies maintaining that the fallen could not be restored to the Church. The list of Caius, giving to Paul thirteen Epistles, is expressly said by Jerome to be in his *Treatise on Montanism* (see Jerome's testimony in Words. p. 32, App.), and Philastrius states that the Epistle was read in the churches only 'sometimes,' because of the teaching of the Epistle, and the support it seemed to give to the Novatian heresy. At the same time this was not the only reason; for Tertullian, who was a Montanist, does not quote the Epistle as Paul's, though stating that the doctrine of the Epistle was received from the apostles.

While there is this negative testimony up to this date, there are on the other side other facts connected with the Western Church: (1) Clement quotes it largely, as he does other New Testament books; (2) the Epistle is included in the old Italic version of Scripture (A.D. 150 to 200, Stuart, i. 144); (3) it is quoted by Irenæus; (4) by Rufinus, one of the few Latin writers of this century, the Hebrews is ascribed to Paul, and is said to be among the books which the Fathers included in the Canon (Words. p. 20, App.). In the Decretals of Damasus (A.D. 366–384) the Pope, who sent Jerome to Palestine to complete his revision of the old Latin versions, the Hebrews is reckoned as Paul's, and is said to be one of those Divine writings which the universal Catholic Church holds (Words. p. 38). Other Decretals by Innocent (402), and by Gelasius (492), to the same effect may be seen in Words. pp. 38, 39, App. Their genuineness, however, is questioned.

From the time of Jerome the Epistle was generally received in the Latin Church, though with some misgivings upon the part of some authorities. Hilary of Poictiers (A.D. 368), and Pelagius (A.D. 425), both speak of it as Paul's (Westc. p. 401), as do Ambrose of Milan (A.D. 340, 397), Lucifer of Cagliari in Sardinia (A.D. 370), and Augustine, though not without some hesitation. The lists of Jerome, Augustine, and the old Latin version all agree with our modern Canon, except that the last omits the two shorter Epistles of John. Cassiodorus (A.D. 468–560) appeals to all, and affirms that the Canon had been long since settled. The Middle Age writers agree in these conclusions—Primasius, Isidore, Alcuin, and Aquinas; and in the year 1546 the Church of Rome pronounced an anathema on all who denied the canonical or the Pauline origin of the Epistle. The evidence is not strengthened by her denunciations, but the decision has value as showing how she sided with Jerome and Augustine, the writers with whom the Latin literature of the Western Church really begins.

Internal evidence, though often regarded as very decisive, is really often delusive. A few years ago the literary world was startled by the discovery of an alleged poem of Milton's, and the highest literary authorities pronounced it impossible that it should be his. No one, on comparing the *L'Allegro* and the *Paradise Lost* of the same author, would guess them to be by the same author. Johnson, it is well known, had three styles, and between the first and the last there is a wide difference. The style of the *Letters of Junius* has been traced in half-a-dozen contemporaneous writers, and all have been charged in succession with the authorship of these volumes. And when we go back and examine literature which belongs to another country and another age, with scanty materials to guide us, conjecture becomes much more unsatisfactory. The Book of Job has been ascribed on internal evidence by the most eminent authorities to Moses, and to the time of the Captivity. The Pentateuch has been divided among a dozen writers, and each critic has sought to set aside the theories of his predecessors. I am speaking only of general impressions when I say that the Hebrews does not differ more from the rest of Paul's Epistles than the

hopeful tone of First Thessalonians differs from the sadness of Second Timothy, than the style and general spirit of the *Galatians* differs from the style and spirit of the *Ephesians*, or than the Book of the Revelation differs from the Gospel of John.

The question needs, however, to be examined in detail.

Let me premise that the question of the authorship differs from the question of the canonical authority. Clement, for example, quotes the Epistle as he quotes other parts of Scripture, but without mentioning the author's name. Origen, who maintained that the thoughts were Paul's, held that the words were by another, and yet he has written Homilies upon the whole book, expounding it as Scripture. The ancient versions, the Italic and the Syriac, place it in the sacred volume without giving evidence of its authorship. In other words, whilst there is extensive external evidence of its Pauline origin, there is still more extensive evidence in favour of its canonicity. It is very conceivable that we may admit the second without admitting the first, being either in doubt, or disposed to think, though without external evidence, that the thoughts are Paul's, and the composition partly Luke's or Apollos's, and partly in the closing chapter Paul's—a view that has found favour with some German scholars. Even Alford, who questions strenuously its Pauline origin on internal evidence chiefly, does not scruple to admit its canonical authority. Calvin and Beza, who question its Pauline authority, also maintain strenuously its canonicity.

Let me revert to the language of Peter in relation to Paul's Epistles (2 Pet. iii. 15) —words that were long since quoted as referring to the *Hebrews*. This second Epistle is said to be written to strangers of the Dispersion, *i.e.* to believing Jews who alone answer the description; and its purpose is to exhort them to patience amid the trials of their faith. This lesson is the very lesson of the *Hebrews*, the readers of which are exhorted to be followers or imitators of those who through faith and patience (μακροθυμία) are inheriting the promises (vi. 12; see xii. 2, ii. 18, iv. 15, 16). This interpretation has been as vigorously questioned as maintained, but no one seems to have considered whether there is not evidence in the Second Epistle of Peter of his knowledge of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is admitted that he has taken expressions largely from Paul's writings generally, and it might be expected that if he had referred to the *Hebrews* he would have taken expressions from it too.

There is a remarkable sameness of expression in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in the Epistles of Peter. Phrases are found in both, and in no other books of the New Testament to an extent and in forms which make it clear the sameness cannot be accidental. A comparison between them will often throw light upon the meaning of each, and it will be found to have interest in connection with the authorship of the Epistle. Peter's pointed reference to Paul's writings, and the fact that he addressed his Epistles to Hebrews scattered abroad, and exhorted them to practise the same patience in suffering upon which the Epistle to the Hebrews insists, all combine to make the Pauline origin of the thoughts at least probable.

The following are the more important parallelisms:—

Heb. i. 1, and 2 Pet. iii. 2, where both describe God as having spoken to the Fathers by prophets, and as giving the Gospel through His Son. Both also use the phrase 'in the last days,' or 'at the end of these days.'

Heb. ii. 7, 9, and 2 Pet. i. 17, where each speaks of glory and honour as ascribed to Christ, quoting apparently from the 8th Psalm, and combining terms found only here.

Both speak of Christ as 'without spot' (ἄμωμος), and as offering Himself without spot unto God (Heb. ix. 14, and 1 Pet. i. 18–20).

Both speak of Him as dying once for all (ἅπαξ) for sin (Heb. ix. and x., and 1 Pet. iii. 18)—a description found only here.

Both speak of the sprinkling of His blood (ῥαντισμός)—a familiar idea in the Law, but found only in these two Epistles, Heb. ix. 13, and 1 Pet. i. 2.

Both speak of the sympathy which Christ has for us, and which we ought also to have for one another (Heb. iv. 15, x. 34, and 1 Pet. iii. 8)—expressions found only in these Epistles.

Both speak of Christ as the Chief Shepherd, or as the Great Shepherd—a comparison found only here.

Both speak of the entrance (εἴσοδος) into Christ's kingdom and glory (Heb. x. 19, and 2 Pet. i. 11), and both speak of angels as subject to the Son (Heb. i. 6, ii. 5, and 1 Pet. iii. 22)—expressions found nowhere else in the New Testament.

Similarly Christians are described in both Epistles, and nowhere else, as strangers (παρεπίδημοι); as having tasted that the Lord is gracious, or as having tasted the good word of life (Heb. vi. 5, and 1 Pet. ii. 3); as 'fed with milk, and not yet fit for solid food' (Heb. v. 12–14, and 1 Pet. ii. 2). In both, Christians are exhorted 'to exercise oversight lest,' 'to look carefully lest' (ἐπισκοποῦντες) (Heb. xii. 15; 1 Pet. v. 2); the only places where the verb is found. In the passages where the awful results of apostasy are described the thought is alike in both, and the guilt is made to depend upon the fact that the men whom they warn had received a fuller knowledge (ἐπίγνωσιν) of the truth (Heb. vi. 4–6, x. 26–29, and 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21). The prayer of the two apostles is that God Himself would be pleased to perfect them (καταρτίσαι ὑμᾶς), or in the revised text of Peter καταρτίσει simply, a phrase found in this sense in these Epistles alone (Heb. xiii. 21; 1 Pet. v. 10). Here are fifteen descriptions of Christ and of Christian men peculiar to these Epistles, and they seem to lead to the conclusion that the writer of the Epistles of Peter must have seen the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Why should he write to Jews at all? Is there not *prima facie* evidence against his writing? True, Peter *was* the apostle of the Circumcision, as Paul was of the Gentiles; but this did not exclude the one or the other from the care of any part of the Church. Peter was the *first* to win the Gentiles to the Church. Paul always visited the synagogues and preached to the Jews in every city to which he went. Nay, he himself says that he was the servant of all that he might gain the more. To the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might by all means save some of them. Nay, he was even specially interested in their salvation. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Therefore he says, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer unto God for Israel is that they may be saved. And if this was his feeling for *all* the seed of Abraham, how much more for those among them who were endeared by their fellowship in the Gospel! He had made collections in all parts of Europe for the relief of the bodily wants of the saints at Jerusalem: how natural that he should think of their temptations and strengthen their hearts to meet them!

Besides, as no one was more zealous than Paul to promote the salvation of his kinsmen, none was more *capable*. He was a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of his fathers. After the straitest sect of their religion he had lived a Pharisee. He was therefore eminently qualified to reason with his own nation on the true nature and end of the Mosaic Institutes, and to handle them with all the learning and wisdom which the Epistle to the Hebrews displays.

But why should he write anonymously? His thirteen Epistles all commence with his name, which occurs nowhere in this Epistle. Like the First Epistle of John, it is anonymous: is that a proof that it is not of apostolic origin?

The Epistles to which Paul has prefixed his name were all addressed to Gentiles;

and as he was the apostle of the Gentiles he magnified his office, and claimed to be heard by them in virtue of it. But in addressing Hebrews his position was different. It is true that the person from whom the Epistle came should be known, for how else could its reception be ensured? They whom the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews desired to assure of the fact knew well the hand from which that Epistle came. 'Pray for us that I may be restored to you the sooner;' 'Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty? with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.' These expressions prove that they to whom the Epistle was sent in the first instance knew from whom it came; and the bearer of the Epistle would naturally inform them by *whom* it was sent. Hence, as we find from external evidence, *all* the Eastern and ancient churches ascribed it to Paul. So says Eusebius; so says Pantænus a hundred and fifty years earlier.

Clearly, therefore, the name of the writer was not withheld from any desire to maintain entire secrecy, much less for any unworthy purpose; for the author was well known to his friends, and could be known by all who cared to inquire of them. Alford indeed remarks on the *gaucherie* of the writer in concealing his name, and yet telling them substantially who he was, and concludes that Paul would never have done this; but this *gaucherie*, if it be such, is chargeable upon the writer, whoever he was; and as Alford has the highest opinion of his profound sagacity, why charge him with what may be no *gaucherie* at all, but may be the soundest wisdom?

The case is that the Epistle was written not only for steadfast friends, but for waverers, for Judaizing Christians, and even indirectly for unchristianized Jews. To two-thirds of this last class he was specially odious—to the Judaizing Christians because he had rebuked Peter openly to his face, and maintained the equality of all Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, under the Gospel; and to unchristianized Jews as the renegade whose life they sought, and whose name would have deterred them from reading anything he had written. In the last two cases his name would have frustrated the very design with which the Epistle was sent.

His Master, who 'witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate,' had set him the example. He withdrew from districts that refused to receive Him. He charged those who witnessed His mighty works not to make Him known, lest they should provoke prematurely the jealousy of His enemies. He carefully abstained from putting stumbling-blocks in their way, lest they should sin. Paul caught the same spirit. He sought to give no offence either to Jew or to Gentile, or to the Church of God. He never compromised truth, indeed never concealed the Cross, or corrupted the simplicity of the Gospel by human additions, or by worldly wisdom; but if the withholding of his name was likely to gain his end, he was the first to withhold it. If Paul had been the author of this Epistle, there are good reasons why he should have withheld it; and as those reasons do not apply with anything like the same force to any one else, the very withholding of the name, instead of diminishing, does, in fact, increase the probability that the Epistle is his.

Upon the question of the internal evidence we cannot enter at length. It may be enough to state briefly the objections and the answers given to them under the heads of single words; or combinations of words; the mode of quotation, and the general style of argument and thought.

1. De Wette quotes a list of words used only in the Hebrews, and not found in the recognised Epistles of Paul. He takes the list as Schultz gives it (see Stuart's *Introduction to the Epistle*, pp. 308 and 289). The total number of such words is 118, or, omitting six that are found in quotations from the LXX., 112. The Epistle covers about twenty pages in the Oxford Revised Text, so that words peculiar to this Epistle

amount to about five and a half in each page. In fact, words of this class amount, according to Forster, to 151, or about seven and a half in each page. Now, in First Corinthians there are 230 words peculiar to that Epistle. The Epistle covers twenty-seven pages, so that they amount to eight and a half per page (see the list in Stuart, pp. 298, 299). If we take *First Timothy*, the case is much stronger. That Epistle is one-third of the length of the *Hebrews*, and it contains 74 words found nowhere else in Paul's writings—nearly half the number found in the Hebrews. The number of peculiar Pauline words found in the entire New Testament (excepting the Hebrews) is 791, of which 614 are found but once, or in only one Epistle of his. These Epistles cover 132 pages, and the peculiar words amount to six in each page. The peculiar words of the Hebrews amount, according to Forster, to seven and a half per page, and yet it is on this ground that De Wette questions the Pauline origin of the Epistle itself.[1]

But we may go further. There are 54 words taken from the LXX. which are found only in the Hebrews and in Paul's Epistles. There are 21 words peculiar to the Hebrews and Paul's Epistles or speeches, and found elsewhere neither in the New Testament nor in the LXX. (*ἀθλεῖν*, etc.—*φιλοξενία*), and there are 38 words which are occasionally found in the New Testament, but which in frequency of usage are peculiar to the Hebrews and to Paul's Epistles (*ἁγιασμός*, used eight times by Paul in Romans, Corinthians, Thessalonians, Timothy, and Hebrews, and only once elsewhere). These are all characteristic words, and are found in the Hebrews and in Paul's acknowledged Epistles. There are indeed 177 more which occur more than once in his acknowledged Epistles (*φιλοτιμεῖσθαι*, *πολιτεύεσθαι*, etc.), none of which are found in the Hebrews, and great stress has been laid upon this fact. Here again, however, we need only to complete the statement of the facts, and the objection is answered. There are 172 words which are acknowledged to be Pauline, and yet are not found in the Corinthians; and there are 159 which are not found in the Romans; while in the shorter Epistles the number of omitted words is proportionately much larger. These figures are subject to correction, as may be gathered from the note below; but they will be found in any case to supply but a feeble reply to the external evidences.

2. The quotations in the Epistle to the Hebrews are objected to by various writers, and on various grounds. De Wette objects to the number of them, and refers to the fact that in Ephesians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus, there are not more than four or five quotations in all; but the answer is plain. In an Epistle to the Hebrews quotations from the Old Testament are the very things we should expect. In fact, while there are 34 quotations in the *Hebrews*, there are 48

[1] I have adopted these figures from Stuart and Forster. Dr. Abbott of Harvard has re-examined the Epistle to the Hebrews and the First Epistle to the Corinthians. See Smith's *Dictionary* (American edition) under *Hebrews*. He states that the words peculiar to the First Corinthians are 217, and the words peculiar to the Hebrews are *about* 300. I have roughly examined Bruder's *Concordance* for the entire New Testament, with the result that, in First Corinthians, the words used in that Epistle are about three and a half to the page; in Hebrews, six to the page; and in all the rest of Paul's Epistles, five. But two facts appeared very obvious in that examination: (1) In many of Paul's Epistles—1 and 2 Tim. and Titus, for example; Eph. and Col.; 1 and 2 Cor.—the same subjects are discussed, and the number of words that occur twice in what are practically parallel passages is very considerable. But for those passages these words would be found only once, and the difference in the proportion of unusual words in the Hebrews and in the confessedly Pauline Epistles would be largely diminished. (2) The peculiarly Pauline phrases found in the Hebrews are both numerous and striking:—*ἀγών* (1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 7; Heb. xii. 1), *ἀναστρέφεσθαι* (2 Cor. i. 12; Eph. ii. 3; Heb. x. 33, xiii. 18), *ἄϊρατος*, *βίβαιος*, *γέλα* (in its metaphorical sense), *ἴδιος*, *θίασος*, and *διαστρίζεσθαι*, *καταργεῖν*, *μυίσης*, *πρὸς παιδίαν*, *εἰς παιδίαν* (2 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. xii. 7, Revised text), *πηλίκος*, *σφόδρα*, *συνείδησις*, *τοιγαροῦν*, *ὑπομονή*, *ὑπόστασις* (confidence), *ὑπόστασιν*, etc.

in the *Romans*, an Epistle unquestionably Paul's, and addressed to a mixed church—Jewish only in part. The quotations in the Hebrews are 3·5 per page: the quotations in the Romans are rather more.

De Wette maintains also that the symbolical use and occasional accommodation of the Old Testament passages and ordinances to the argument in hand is foreign to Paul's manner, though like Philo's. But the facts are really the other way. Paul uses the Old Testament in his acknowledged writings in the very way in which the Jews were accustomed to use it. He sometimes appeals to direct prophetic utterances; sometimes to similarity of sentiment; sometimes he accommodates passages which in their original reference have a local or temporary meaning to describe things that happened at the time he wrote. Sometimes he appeals to the Old Testament for analogical cases to confirm or impress the doctrine which he inculcates, and sometimes he uses Old Testament language as the vehicle of thought in order to express his own ideas. In particular, and to meet De Wette's objection, he employs the Old Testament *ex concessu* in what seems an allegorizing sense. It is thus he allegorizes on the history of Sarah and Hagar (Gal. iv.); on the command of Moses not to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn (1 Cor. x.); on the veil over the face of Moses (2 Cor. iii.); on the declaration that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife (Eph. v.). All these examples are found in Paul's accepted writings, and all have their parallels in the *Hebrews*.

Schultz, and after him De Wette and Alford, object to the *manner* of citing the Old Testament by Paul, and by the writer of the Hebrews, as different. Paul, it is said, always appeals to the Old Testament as a written record, whereas the writer of the Hebrews quotes it as the immediate word of God, or of the Holy Ghost. Paul's phrase is, 'It is written;' the *Hebrews'* phrase is, 'God says,' or 'the Spirit says;' and, it is added, Paul never uses the phrase, 'God says,' which, it is said, is found in this Epistle.

Now the facts are that in twenty-one cases the quotation in the Hebrews, 'He says' (εἶπε, λέγει, φησί), is used generally without any nominative; in thirteen of these God, or the Lord, is probably the nominative; four have 'Christ' implied; in two other passages 'the Spirit' is expressed; and once we have 'the Scripture saith;' and once 'that which was commanded.' In Romans, 'It is written,' or a similar form, is used sixteen times; 'the Scripture saith' is used eight times; 'Isaiah saith,' 'Moses saith,' 'the oracle saith,' is used fourteen times. So the Hebrew usage preponderates even in the Romans.

The statement that Paul never used 'God saith' is contradicted by the fact that 'God' is the nominative in two passages in the *Romans*, in four passages in the *Corinthians*, and in one in the *Galatians*. Thrice only, indeed, is 'God,' or 'Lord,' expressed (2 Cor. vi. 16, 17, 18); but then in Hebrews, out of fourteen passages, it is expressed only once (vi. 14).

The Epistles to the Corinthians may be taken as a specimen of the formula of quotation. In *First Corinthians* 'It is written' is always used, except in one passage (vi. 16), and four times there is no formula. In *Second Corinthians* 'It is written' is thrice used; 'He saith' thrice; and there are two quotations without any formula. There is in fact no great difference between the Hebrews and other Epistles, except that 'He saith' is there the preponderating form, as elsewhere 'It is written' is the preponderating form. Even of these differences there is an obvious explanation. The common form of quotation from Scripture among the Jews was, and still is, 'It is said,' or 'According as it is said.' To a Greek this phrase would be very ambiguous: to a Jew it is perfectly natural and clear. Of course this reasoning does not prove

that Paul wrote the Hebrews; but it proves that, whoever wrote it, wrote as to Jews, and as one who knew their ways. It proves, moreover, that the difference of quotation between the Hebrews and other Epistles is trivial, and is explained by facts with which Paul was perfectly familiar.

3. But what of the argument from these quotations? Who could imagine, it has been said, that the second Psalm, for example, had anything to do with the resurrection, or that the eighth Psalm had anything to do with our Lord, or that the 110th Psalm, with its reference to Melchizedek, applies to the Divine priesthood of our Redeemer? These quotations, it has been said, are not made in the proper sense of the passages quoted. And again the answer is at hand. The second Psalm is quoted in the New Testament, and is applied to our Lord by the apostles (Acts iv. 25); and the very verse quoted in the Hebrews to prove the resurrection of Christ is quoted for the same purpose by Paul (Acts xiii. 33), being quoted by no other New Testament writer.

The eighth Psalm is quoted by our Lord as fulfilled in Himself ('Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings,' etc.); and is made the basis of a similar argument by Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 27 ('and hast put all things under His feet').

As for the 110th Psalm, which contains the allusion to Melchizedek, our Lord has quoted it as fulfilled in Himself, and it is recognised as Messianic by His Jewish hearers. 'Jesus answered and said, How say the Scriptures that Christ is the Son of David? for David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand till I make Thy foes Thy footstool. David himself therefore calleth Him Lord.' If this use of the Psalm is Philonistic, as some have stated, it is also scriptural.

In brief, the common arguments based on internal evidence against the Pauline origin of the Epistle prove little, and certainly cannot be regarded as setting aside the external authority.

That when the writer of the Hebrews expresses thoughts found elsewhere in Paul's writings, he often employs forms of expression that differ from those of his acknowledged Epistles, is admitted, and what the most satisfactory explanation of those differences may be is a question open to discussion. A later expression of the same thoughts by the same writer, a Hebrew original, the employment of the pen, and, in some degree, of the style of another, all have been suggested as explanations. We are not bound to decide on any of these explanations. What may be safely affirmed is, that there is nothing in this difficulty that justifies us in setting aside the historical evidence, which is very decidedly to the effect that in its substance the Epistle is Paul's.

II.—THE ARGUMENT.

The Epistle consists of two parts: the first part chiefly doctrinal (chap. i.–x. 18), the second part chiefly practical (x. 19–xiii.)—the whole abounding in warnings against apostasy and unbelief.

1. DOCTRINAL.—In the first part, the supreme authority of the gospel and the inferiority of the law and of all other dispensations, are proved by comparing the heralds or teachers of these dispensations, their servants or priests, their covenants, their worship, and their sacrifices (i.–x. 18).

2. PRACTICAL.—Upon this doctrinal argument are based exhortations to patient endurance and trust. Faith is shown to be the essential and permanent grace; its

power and blessedness are traced through a long line of heroes and confessors, ending in Christ Himself; and the Hebrew Christians are encouraged to endure trials as fatherly chastisement common to all true sonship, and fitted to promote their holiness. The blessedness of the new covenant is then used, as often in the earlier part of the Epistle, to set forth the awfulness of apostasy (x. 19–xii.); and the Epistle closes with exhortations to special duties and virtues, blended with personal allusions, and ending with the apostolic benediction (chap. xiii.).

Doctrinal Outline (chap. i.–x. 18).

Christ, the author and teacher of the gospel, is superior to prophets, to angelic messengers, and to Moses, the mediator of the law.

1. *Christ is superior to prophets*, not in time, indeed (i. 1, 2), but in the unity and completeness of His teaching (vv. 1, 2), and in His personal dignity as 'Light of light,' Son and Lord or heir, through whom the worlds were made and are still sustained (ver. 3), and as Redeemer and King (vv. 2, 3).

2. *Christ is superior to angels*, as proved by His Divine origin, which differs from that of angels (vv. 4, 5), by the worship they pay Him (ver. 6), by His office as eternal King (vv. 8, 9) and as Creator (ver. 10), by His unchangeableness, and by His mission to preside and reign, as it is theirs to serve (vv. 13, 14).

Hence the practical lesson, Give the more earnest heed to this gospel which Christ introduced, which apostles and others attested, and which God Himself confirmed by every form of miracle, and by the varied gifts of the Holy Ghost (ii. 1–4).

And yet this Son is 'man' also, a fresh proof of His superiority to angels, and of His fitness for His office. For it is 'man' who is to have supremacy (ii. 5–8), and it is by His manhood our Lord becomes our brother and helper and sympathizing priest (ii. 9–18).

3. *Christ is superior to Moses*, one of the most faithful of God's servants. Moses was apostle, messenger, only; Christ was apostle and priest (iii. 1). Moses was part of a great economy; Christ was the founder of the economy itself (ver. 3, 'house'). Moses and his economy were creations; Christ was the creator (ver. 4). Moses was a servant in the house; Christ was son (vv. 5, 6)—the first in *another's* house, the second in what was His own.

Again the lesson is plain, Be faithful and obedient and true—a lesson enforced by solemn examples and appeals. The Israelites perished through unbelief (iii. 7–11), and a like spirit will bring a like punishment and create a new example (ver. 12). The writer reminds his readers that we share in salvation only if we persevere (ver. 14). He appeals again to the case of the Israelites (vv. 15–19). They had a promise and a gospel (iv. 1–3) as well as we, and yet they missed 'the land' and the rest that were promised them. So David assures us that there is a truer rest, and a better Canaan, which later generations, and it may be we with them, may also miss through the same unbelief (vv. 4–11). Great caution is needed, for the Divine word discriminates, and God Himself, who knows all, is judge (vv. 12, 13). And yet there is hope even for the feeblest believer. Our High Priest is Son of God and Son of Man. He is therefore as prompt to pity as He is mighty to save.

4. *Christ's priesthood superior to Aaron's* (chap. v.–vii. 28).—Every high priest (*a*) must be one with those he represents (ver. 1); (*b*) must have the 'considerate mildness,' the 'sweet reasonableness' of one who knows his own weakness and ours; (*c*) must be prepared to offer sacrifices for others (vv. 2, 3); and having to act in matters relating to God (*d*), must be appointed by God (ver. 4). The first of these qualifica-

tions he has insisted upon already (chap. ii.); the third he discusses later (chap. ix. 15–x. 18); the fourth and the second (*d* and *b*) he now proceeds to prove.

Christ, it is clear, did not take upon Himself this office, as is shown from the second Psalm, and from the hundred and tenth (vv. 5, 6). His fitness to exercise compassion is proved by His own trials and prayers and tears, and by the efficacy of them (vv. 7–10).

Digression on the priesthood of Melchizedek, with warnings and exhortations. The digression necessary, partly because of the rudimentary knowledge of the persons addressed, partly because of the mystery of the truths themselves (vv. 11–14). Progress in knowledge essential (vi. 1–3): a truth confirmed by the danger of apostasy (vv. 4–6), and the miserable recompense of unfruitful professors (vv. 7, 8), and by his own hope of better things for them, founded on the Divine faithfulness and on their own love (vv. 9, 10). But he desires them still to persevere. Strengthened by the example of those who are fellow-heirs with them (vv. 11, 12), by the example of Abraham, and by the promise given to them, which promise comes to us with a double confirmation, and introduces us to even greater blessedness (vv. 19, 20).

The argument is now resumed. Christ being a priest after the order of Melchizedek, is superior to Aaron. Melchizedek was king and priest (vii. 1, 2). His priesthood was not hereditary or temporary, and he received homage from Abraham, and virtually from Levi (vv. 3–10). And in all this superiority Christ shares, and shares pre-eminently. In dignity and in authority He is superior, and also in the perfection of His work. The Levitical priesthood perfected or justified none, and it was finally set aside on the ground of its unprofitableness. Christ's priesthood, on the other hand, offers a sacrifice once for all, and saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him (vv. 11–19). There are also other proofs. Christ was appointed with an oath, with a double oath, with higher sanctions (vv. 20, 22), and holds a permanent office, while His character and sonship give power to His office both with God and with man (vv. 23–25, 26–28).

5. *The Superiority of the New Covenant.*—The efficacy, sacrifices, and worship contrasted with the imperfect and typical institutions of the law.

Christ, as priest, is seated at God's right hand, the minister of a true tabernacle, not a typical one, and has offered a divine and heavenly sacrifice (viii. 1–6), whence it is clear that we have a better covenant, based upon better promises, and pronounced by God Himself to be superior to the old (vv. 8, 9); for it is written on men's hearts (ver. 10), gives its blessings to all (ver. 11), and provides for the forgiveness of sin (ver. 13). Divine and beautiful as were the temple and its services (ix. 1–5), they belonged rather to an earthly state (ver. 1) than to a heavenly one (ver. 11); and showed that the way into the holiest was not yet open, and that consciences were not at rest. The whole was at best a type or parable of a coming reality, which last alone could set completely right what was disordered (vv. 6–10). All this Christ has realized by the offering up of Himself (vv. 11–14), ratifying the new covenant by His death (vv. 15–17) as the old typical covenant was ratified by the blood of its victims (vv. 8–21). Hereby He has obtained forgiveness (vv. 21, 22), and has effectually opened the way into heaven, where He now appears for us (ver. 24); whence He will come again as judge, and complete His work as the Saviour of all who believe.

The superiority of His sacrifice is further proved by the inefficiency of the sacrifices of the law, which only revealed, and did not remove sin (x. 1–4, 11), by God's repudiation of the victims and offerings of the law (vv. 6–8), and by the preparation and substitution of the offering of the body of Christ (vv. 5, 7, 9), and by the reality of the efficacy of His sacrifice. It requires and admits of no repetition—a repetition that is

forbidden alike by Christ's position in glory (vv. 12, 13), by the perfect sanctification of all who believe, and by the completeness of that forgiveness of which prophets have long since spoken (vv. 15–18).

PRACTICAL LESSONS AND EXHORTATIONS (x. 19–39, xi. 1–38, xi. 39–xii. 11, xii. 12–29, xiii. 1–25).

Grounds for *stedfastness*: An open door into heaven (x. 19), a new way of access (ver. 20), and Christ's appearance in heaven for us (ver. 21).

Stedfastness is strengthened by a fuller faith in Christ, who has freed us from guilt and impurity (ver. 22), by hope in the Divine faithfulness (ver. 23), by love of the Church, and continued fellowship with it (vv. 24, 25).

Motives that ought to confirm us in stedfastness and guard us from apostasy: The impossibility of finding another sacrifice (ver. 26), the danger and imminence of final condemnation, and the heavier punishment that awaits apostates under the gospel (vv. 28–31). The same lesson is enforced by the memory of past struggles and losses, which are vain unless we persevere, by the certainty of our reward if we are faithful, and by the fact that a life of loving trust and expectancy is ever dear to God (vv. 35–39).

The nature, object, and necessity of *faith* (chap. xi. 1–6). Its utility in giving understanding or perception (ver. 2), righteousness (ver. 4), heaven (ver. 5). Its power and blessedness attested, before the law, by the life and blessedness of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, etc. (vv. 4–22); under the law, by Moses, by the Israelites at the Exode, by the early victories in Canaan, and by Rahab (vv. 24–30, 41); after the law, by Judges and earlier Prophets (vv. 32–35); by others under the Kings, and in the days between Malachi and John the Baptist (vv. 35–38).

Reasons for *patience* (xi. 39, 40–xii. 11): The example of the Fathers, who finally received their reward, though it was long delayed (xi. 39; xii. 1), and of Christ Himself, who suffered more than all—the originator and finisher of faith (vv. 2–4). Further reasons are found in the fact that discipline is a test of all sonship (ver. 5), an evidence of Divine love (ver. 6), and a means of increasing holiness.

Exhortations to greater earnestness and to the cultivation of all virtue—(*a*) what we have to do (vv. 12–14); (*b*) and avoid (vv. 15–17); (*c*) and consider the excellence of the Mosaic law (vv. 18–21), and the greater excellence of the gospel (vv. 22–24). The obligation of greater earnestness (vv. 25–29), and of all virtue (chap. xiii.). Love of the brethren (ver. 1), love of strangers (ver. 2), compassion on all that suffer (ver. 3); purity in married life, contentment, and trust (vv. 4–6). The loving remembrance and imitation of departed leaders (vv. 8, 9), and a heart established by grace, and by our participation in the great sacrifice of the Cross—a sacrifice for sin offered without the camp, in which therefore none, as in the sin-offering under the law, can share (vv. 10, 11) but those who go forth without the camp (vv. 12, 13). This we do, offering continually the sacrifice of thanksgiving and of a consistent confession of Christ's name (ver. 15), with the added sacrifice of beneficence and subjection (vv. 16, 17).

The writer asks the prayers of Hebrew Christians (vv. 18, 19); prays to God for them—to God as the author of peace through the redemption of Christ (ver. 20), to God as the giver and perfecter of all good, working in us through Christ (ver. 21); commends to them his Epistle, speaks of the speedy visit of Timothy, and closes with the usual Pauline salutation (vv. 21–25).

Summary of Early Evidence on the Authorship and Genuineness of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with Reference to Authorities accessible mostly to English Readers.

Name.	Place.	Date.	Evidence.	Reference.
Clement	Rome.	70-90	Quotes largely: no name	Jacobson's Patr. Apost.; Stuart, i. 77, 94.
Ignatius†	Antioch	107-115	Quotes twice	Ante-Nic. Fathers, pp. 190, 250.
Polycarp	Smyrna	80-150	Quotes once more	Routh's Op. Eccl. 1, 13, 24. See Forster, p. 547.
Justin Martyr	..	103*-167*	Quotes thrice	Ante-Nicene Fathers; Westcott, p. 147.
Barnabas?	..	2d Cent.	Quotes once?.	Ante-Nicene Fathers.
Irenæus†	Lyons	130*-200*	Quotes twice: once as Paul's	Ante-Nic. Fathers, Ir. 1, 238, 276.
Pantænus	Alexandria	155-216	Ascribes it to Paul.	Routh, i. 376; Westcott, 309.
Caius‡	Rome.	190	Does not include it in Paul's Epistles	Wordsworth, 367; Westcott.
Muratori Canon‡	Rome.	200	Does not seem to include it.	
Vet. Versio Ital.	Italy	200?	Puts it among Canonical Books	Stuart, i. 144.
Versio Syriaca	Palestine	200?	,, ,,	
Hippolytus†‡	Italy	230, d.	*Is said not to quote it, but quotes thrice*	Ante-Nicene Fathers.
Tertullian‡	Africa	240, d.	Ascribes to Barnabas, and *speaks of it as Apostolic in doctrine*	Delitzsch.
Cyprian‡	Africa	248-258	Does not quote, and speaks of Epistles to Seven Churches	Ante-Nicene Fathers, p. 30; Westcott.
Clement	Alexandria	220,* d.	Says Paul wrote it in Hebrew.	Westcott, 311; Wordsworth, 365.
Origen	Alexandria	253, d.	Says Paul gave the thoughts, and quotes it as his	Wordsworth, 237; Stuart, i. 127.
Dionysius	Alexandria	247	Ascribes it to Paul.	Westcott, 319.
Gregory Thaumat.	Cæsarea	212-270	,, ,,	Cardinal Mai; Wordsworth.
Council of Antioch	Antioch	269	,, ,,	Routh, iii. 298.
Archelaus	Mesopotamia	270	Quotes it twice	Routh, v. 127, 149.
Peter, Bp.	Alexandria	300	Ascribes it to Paul.	Routh, iv. 35.
Alexander	Alexandria	313	,, ,,	Lardner, ii. 302.
Council of Nice	Nice	325	,, ,,	Wordsworth, Intr. 365.
Methodius	Lycia	311	Quotes it	Westcott, 339.
Gregory Nazianzen	Nyssa	332	Ascribes it to Paul.	Wordsworth, p. [23].
Eusebius	Cæsarea	340	Discusses the whole question, and ascribes it to Paul	Wordsworth, 364; Delitz. 10.
Chrysostom	..	347-412	Ascribes it to Paul.	Westcott, 485.
Council of Laodicea	Laodicea	363	,, ,,	Westcott, p. 483.
Victorinus‡	Africa	386	Speaks of Eps. to Seven Churches	Routh, iii. 455.
Council of Carthage	Africa	397	Ascribes it to Paul.	Cave, Hist. Lit. 368; Wordsworth [33]; Westcott, 483.
Cyril	Jerusalem	349	,, ,,	Westcott, 491.
Jerome	Palestine and Rome	345-420	Ascribes it to Paul: notes the Latin feeling	Wordsworth, 30, 31; Delitzsch, 12.
Damascus	Rome	366	Ascribes it to Paul.	Wordsworth [38].
Epiphanius	Constantia	367	,, ,,	Wordsworth, p. 16.
Hilary	Poictiers	350-368	,, ,,	Westcott; Wordsworth, Intro. 368.
Lucifer	Cagliari	370	,, ,,	Westcott, 404.
Basil	Cæsarea	371	,, ,,	Westcott, 397.
Athanasius	Alexandria	373	,, ,,	Lardner, ii. 400, iii. 9; Cramer's Catena.
Ambrose	Milan	374	,, ,,	Lardner, iii. 330, 1; Davidson.
Amphilochius	Iconium	380	,, ,,	Wordsworth, p. [22].
Philastrius†	Brescia	380	,, ,,	Wordsworth, p. [20].
Theodoret	Cyrus	393	,, ,,	Wordsworth, Intro. 364.
Theodore	Cilicia	394	,, ,,	Westcott, 393.
Augustine	Hippo	395	With some doubt, ascribes it to Paul	Wordsworth, p. [34].
Ephrem	Palestine	397	Ascribes it to Paul.	Lardner, ii. 482.
Innocent	Rome.	402	,, ,,	Westcott, 512.
Sahidic Version	Egypt	4th Cent.	Includes the Epistle.	
MSS. Alex. Vat.	..	4th, 5th,	Hebrews is included among the	Tischendorf, N. T. 1858, p. 555.
Sinaitic Ephr.	..	6th Cen-	Epistles of Paul	,, ,, ,,
Coislin (F.)	..	turies	,, ,, ,,	,, ,, ,,
Canones Apostolici	..	Uncert'n	Ascribes it to Paul.	Words. Canon, 85. p. [36].
Ruffinus	Sicily	320-410	,, ,,	Words. p. [19]; West. 510.

* Indicates proximate dates.
† Authorities supposed not to refer to the Epistle, but really referring to it.
‡ Writers of the Latin or Western Church.

OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT ON THE AUTHORSHIP.

WAS the Epistle written by Apollos, p. 1; or by Barnabas, p. 2; or by Clement or by Luke, p. 3.
Was it written by Paul?

EXTERNAL TESTIMONY.

It was written in his lifetime and has his usual authorization, p. 4. (See also pp. 12 and 13.)
Peter's Testimony, p. 5; Clement and other *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 5.
Eastern Testimony—
Palestine—Cyril, Jerome, Eusebius, Gregory, Chrysostom, pp. 6, 7.
Asia Minor—Gregory, Amphilochius, Theodore, etc., p. 7.
Alexandrian Writers—Pantænus, Clement, Athanasius, Origen, Dionysius, pp. 7, 8.
Greek MSS. and Versions, p. 8.
Western Testimony—
Cyprian, Victorinus, Hilary, p. 8; Hippolytus, p. 9; Caius, Muratorian Canon, etc., p. 10; Clement, Irenæus, Decretals, Jerome, p. 11.

INTERNAL TESTIMONY (p. 12).

Peter. Why Paul should write to Hebrews, p. 13.
(1) Words found only in Hebrews—style, p. 14.
(2) Quotations, and mode of introducing them, pp. 15, 16.
(3) Arguments based on quotations, p. 17.
Result.

English readers may be glad to have a few books named which they will find specially helpful:—GOUGE's (W.) Commentary on the Epistle, being the substance of thirty years' Wednesday's lectures (two vols. fol. 1655), is still held in high esteem; OWEN's (Dr. J.) *Exposition of the Hebrews* (in four vols. folio, 1668–74) is full of elaborate, doctrinal, and experimental comments; MACLEAN's (A.) Paraphrase and Commentary on the Epistle is very judicious and excellent, and deserves to be better known; BROWN's (Dr. John) Exposition is rich in evangelical and practical comment, though less critically accurate than is usual in his expositions; for the argument, and for pithy, striking suggestion, BENGEL's *Gnomon* will never be consulted without advantage; BLEEK and DELITZSCH are very helpful for verbal criticism, and the last for doctrinal exposition; THOLUCK and EBRARD and STUART are each helpful in all departments; ALFORD is on this Epistle largely indebted to Delitzsch, and is generally good; for Rabbinical learning, the English reader may turn with profit to Owen and Lightfoot and Gill; as the scholar may turn to Wetstein, and Schœtgenius and Kuinoel.

TO THE HEBREWS.

(This is the only heading of the Epistle sanctioned by the most ancient authorities.)

[The marginal parallel passages in clarendon type are the passages from the originals of which the words of the text are taken. In citing these, figures in brackets give the Hebrew or Greek reference; when *Gr.* or *Heb.* is added, it indicates from which text the quotation is taken.]

CHAPTER I. 1–II. 4.

The excellency of the New Dispensation—proved by the superiority of Christ to Prophets and Angels, as Son of God, Creator, Redeemer, and King, i. 1–14. *—Consequent Responsibility*, ii. 1–4.

1 GOD, who at sundry times and [a] in divers manners spake [1]
2 in time past unto the fathers by [2] the prophets, hath [b] in these last days [3] [c] spoken unto us by *his* Son,[4] [d] whom he hath [5] appointed heir of all things, [e] by whom also he [6] made
3 the worlds; [f] who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image [7] of his person,[8] and [g] upholding all things by the word of his power, [h] when he had by himself purged our [9] sins, [i] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
4 being made [10] so much better than the angels, as [k] he hath by
5 inheritance obtained [11] a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time,

[l] Thou art my Son,
This day have I begotten thee?

And again,

[m] I will be to him a Father,
And he shall be to me a Son?

6 And again, when he bringeth in [12] [n] the first-begotten into the world, he saith, [o] And let all the angels of God worship him.
7 And of the angels he saith,

[p] Who maketh his angels spirits,[13]
And his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But unto [14] the Son *he saith*,

[a] Num. xii. 6, 8.
[b] Deut. iv. 30; Gal. iv. 4; Eph. i. 10.
[c] Jo. i. 17, xv. 15, ch. ii. 3.
[d] Ps. ii. 8; Mat. xxi. 38, xxviii. 18; Jo. iii. 35; Rom. viii. 17.
[e] Jo. i. 3; 1 Cor. viii. 6; Eph. iii. 9; Col. i. 16.
[f] Jo. i. 14, xiv. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Phil. ii. 6; Col. i. 15.
[g] Jo. i. 4; Col. i. 17; Rev. iv. 11.
[h] ch. vii. 27. ix. 12, 14. 26.
[i] Ps. cx. (cix.) 1; Eph. i. 20; Dan. vii. 14; ch. viii. 1, x. 12, xii. 2; 1 Pet. iii. 22.
[k] Eph. i. 21; Phil. ii. 9, 10.
[l] Ps. ii. 7; Acts xiii. 33; ch. v. 5.
[m] 2 Sam. vii. 14; 1 Chron. xvii. 10, xxviii. 6; Ps. lxxxix. 26, 27.
[n] Rom. viii. 29; Col. i. 18; Rev. i. 5.
[o] Deut. xxxii. 43, Gr. Ps. xcvii. (xcvi.) 7; 1 Pet. iii. 22
[p] Ps. civ. (ciii.) 4.

[1] having in many portions and in many ways spoken
[2] in
[3] *read*, at the end of these days
[4] in one who is Son
[5] *omit* hath
[6] he also
[7] very impress
[8] substance
[9] *omit* by himself *and* our, *and tr.* made purification of sins
[10] having become
[11] obtained
[12] *or*, when he again bringeth in
[13] *or*, winds
[14] *or*, of, *as in ver.* 7

[q] Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever:
A sceptre of righteousness [15] *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom.
9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;
Therefore God, *even* thy God, [r] hath anointed thee
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
10 And,
[s] Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid [16] the foundation of the earth;
And the heavens are the works of thine hands:
11 [t] They shall perish; but thou remainest;
And they all shall wax old as doth a garment;
12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up,
And they shall be changed: [17]
But thou art the same,
And thy years shall not fail.
13 But to [18] which of the angels said he [19] at any time,
[u] Sit [20] on my right hand,
Until I make thine enemies thy footstool?
14 [v] Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for [21] them who shall be [w] heirs of salvation? [22]

CHAP. II. 1. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, [23] lest at any time we should 2 let *them* slip. [24] For if the word [x] spoken by angels was [25] stedfast, and [y] every transgression and disobedience received a just 3 recompence of reward; [z] how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; [a] which at the first began to be spoken by [26] the Lord, and was [b] confirmed unto us by them that heard 4 *him*; [c] God also bearing *them* witness, [26] [d] both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and [e] gifts [27] of the Holy Ghost, [f] according to his own will?

[q] Ps. xlv. (xliv.) 6, 7.
[r] Isa. lxi. 1; Acts iv. 27, x. 38.
[s] Ps. cii. (ci.) 25, etc.
[t] Isa. xxxiv. 4, li. 6; Mat. xxiv. 35; 2 Pet. iii. 7, 10; Rev. xxi. 1.
[u] Ver. 3; Ps. cx. (cix.) 1; Mat. xxii. 44; Mk. xii. 36; Lu. xx. 42; ch. x. 12.
[v] Gen. xix. 16, xxxii. 1, 2, 24; Ps. xxxiv. 7, xci. 11, ciii. 20, 21; Dan. iii. 28, vii. 10, x. 11; Mat. xviii. 10; Lu. i. 19, ii. 9, 13; Acts xii. 7, etc., xxvii. 23.
[w] Rom. viii. 17; Tit. iii. 7; Jas. ii. 5; 1 Pet. iii. 7.
[x] Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxviii. 17; Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19.
[y] Num. xv. 30, 31; Deut. iv. 3, xvii. 2, 5, 12, xxvii. 26.
[z] Ch. x. 28, 29, xii. 25.
[a] Mat. iv. 17; Mk. i. 14; ch. i. 2.
[b] Lu. i. 2.
[c] Mk. xvi. 20; Acts xiv. 3, xix. 11; Rom. xv. 18, 19; 1 Cor. ii. 4.
[d] Acts ii. 22, 43.
[e] 1 Cor. xii. 4, 7, 11.
[f] Eph. i. 5, 9.

[15] *read*, and the sceptre of (*and tr.*) uprightness
[16] didst lay
[17] *read and tr.* roll them up; as a garment also shall they be changed
[18] *or*, of, *as in ver.* 7
[19] hath he said
[20] Sit thou
[21] *i.e.* to do service on behalf of
[22] who are to obtain salvation
[23] that were heard
[24] drift away from them
[25] through—by means of—angels became, *or* proved to be
[26] witness with *them*
[27] manifold miracles (powers), and different distributions

Vers. 1, 2. The author contrasts the gradual and multiform revelations given of old in the person of the prophets, with the revelation given at the end of the Jewish dispensation in the person of Him who is Son.—**God who . . . spake**; rather, God having spoken; the Greek expressing the *preliminary* nature of former communications.—**Sundry times** describes rather the many imperfect revelations—which were still parts of one whole—given through Enoch, Abraham, Moses, etc., each knowing *in part* only; **as divers manners** points to the many ways in which the revelations were given—mysterious promise, pregnant type, dark prophecy, or it may be, though less probably, dream, vision, audible utterance; while under the Gospel the revelation is the life and dying and explicit teaching of Christ, with the added enlightenment—still in Christ—of the Holy Spirit. . . . God spake *in* the prophets, as he spake **in one who was Son.** So the preposition means, indicating not so much instrumentality 'through them,' as God *in* them, abiding and inspiring. . . . 'One who was Son.' Such is the force of the original where there is no article, in contrast to *the* prophets of the previous clause. The completeness, the unity, the supreme authority of the revelation that closes the preliminary and partial

lessons of the old economy is the theme that fills the writer's mind. . . . The Son of God—incarnate as we afterwards learn (ii. 14)—is in His life and death and teaching the full revelation of the Father, and of all that is essential to salvation.—**At the end of these days.** Such is the corrected text. The common text speaks of the Son as introducing the new economy; the corrected text speaks of Him as closing the old. Christ's kingship really began at Pentecost; but the last days of the old economy continued overlapping the new till Jerusalem was overthrown, and the possibility of keeping the Levitical law had passed away (Heb. viii. 13). The Epistle thus prepares all readers for the overthrow which is seen to be at hand, and which was to prove a sore temptation even to Christian Jews.—**Heir,** possessor, like the 'heritor' of Scotland and the *hæres* of the old Roman law (Justinian, *Inst.* xi. 19). Already Christ was Lord, and whatever was God's was His also (Acts ii. 36; John xvii. 10).—**By whom,** through rather, *i.e.* by whose agency or instrumentality.—**The worlds.** The Greek word in this passage describes all things as existing in time, and in successive economies, natural and moral. Elsewhere the *world* often represents the world in its material order and beauty (Heb. iv. 3, ix. 26), or, as inhabited, the world of men (Heb. i. 6, ii. 5.) In the second of these senses, the word is sometimes used to mark a spirit or temper as opposed to the Gospel (Heb. xi. 7; Jas. iv. 4; 1 John v. 4.)

Ver. 3. **The brightness**—the *effulgence*—of the divine glory, with allusion probably to the visible glory of the Shekinah over the mercy-seat, though the meaning is deeper. 'Light of (*i.e.* emanating from Him who is the) light.'—**The express image,** the impress or stamp wherein and whereby the divine essence is made manifest: and all this He is in His own nature, so the Greek implies ('being,' comp. John i. 1), not that He became so by incarnation. 'Image of his **person**' is not felicitous. The earlier rendering, substance (Tyndale, essence or nature), is more accurate.—**And bearing,** upholding and directing all things by the word, the *fiat* of His power, **when** (rather *after*) **he had made purification of sins,** *i.e.* had atoned for them, **sat down,** etc.

What higher honour can be given to our Lord? He is the glory—the love and holiness of God made visible; the very essence, the nature of the Father in loving embodiment. He therefore that has the Son has the Father also.

Note that God not only acted in creating all things; He acts still in upholding them. A creation regulated by dead law alone is not Scripture teaching (see Acts xvii. 24, 25, He *is giving* to all life and all things, 27, 28). And it is in and through Christ this is done.

Ver. 4. **Having become,** after He had made at nement for sin, **as much superior to the angels, as he has obtained a name far more excellent than they.** His greatness is partly essential and partly acquired (see Phil. ii. 6–11). The first He had as Son before the world was; the second He obtained through His incarnation, and after He had suffered.

Vers. 5–14. Now follows the proof of this superiority—in name and, as name generally implies in Scripture, in nature.

Ver. 5. **My Son.** Again by position the emphasis is on this name, and on the relation it describes: **My Son art thou, to-day have I begotten thee.** These words have been referred to the incarnation, when the 'holy thing' born of the Virgin was called Son of God (Luke i. 35); or to His resurrection and exaltation, when He is marked out as Son of God in regal dignity, 'in power' as Messianic King (Rom. i. 4). This last view is favoured by Acts xiii. 32, 33, where this identical promise is said to be fulfilled unto us when God raised up Jesus. Others refer the words to the essential nature of our Lord, as Son of the Father by 'eternal generation,' as it is called. God sent the Son, it is said, and so He had dignity before His incarnation and before His resurrection. The fact is, the word Son describes His relation to the Father, both personal and official; and 'I have begotten thee' applies to every state to which the word 'Son' applies—His original nature, His incarnation, and His kingship. In the following verse He is called 'the first-begotten'—a title not given to Him in connection with His incarnation, but describing His dignity and rights. He is called first-begotten, never first-*created*, for all things belong to Him, as all things were made by Him. This expression, the first-begotten, is peculiar in this figurative sense to Paul's writings (Rom. viii. 29; Col. i. 15, 18; Rev. i. 5; comp. Heb. xii. 23).

Ver. 6. **And** in accordance with this relation, **whenever** (to quote another passage, 'again') **He bringeth** or leadeth (literally 'shall have led') **in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.'** Here are several difficulties. The quotation from Ps. xcvii. 7 is not exact, as most of the quotations in this Epistle are. In Deut. xxxii. 43 the very words are found in the Septuagint; but there are no words corresponding to them in the Hebrew text. The Psalm belongs to the Messianic Psalms, and the exact words of Deuteronomy describe the welcome given to the Messianic King. Two passages are here blended in one. Some translate 'bringeth or leadeth again,' and refer the words to our Lord's second coming alone. But 'bringeth in' is hardly appropriate to the second coming; and the use of an expression that describes an indefinite future is justified by the fact that it is a quotation of what was spoken long ago, from which time the futurity begins. It is therefore better to regard the language as fulfilled whenever Christ is introduced into the world of men. Then—at His birth, His resurrection, His kingdom—is He the object of angelic worship.—**The angels.** The Hebrew of Ps. xcvii. 7 is, 'all ye mighty or divine ones,' a word applied to God, and applicable to magistrates, and to all who had a divine message and spoke in God's name (John x. 34). Comp. 'The divine in man,' 'The divine disciples sat.' Divine though they be, the Son is exalted above them all—in His nature, and in the reverence paid Him. (See on ii. 6.)

Ver. 7. As to angels, moreover, they were made by Him (not begotten). They are spirits, not sons; and His servants or ministers, a 'flame of fire.' Some render 'spirits' by 'winds,' and read, 'He maketh His angels as winds, passive, swift, and untiring.' They do His will, as do the tempest and the lightning. In the Hebrew of the Psalm (civ. 4) either meaning is possible, 'He maketh the winds or spirits His messengers,' or 'His messengers spirits' or winds. In the

Septuagint, and so here, on the other hand, the only allowable meaning is, 'His angels or messengers winds' or 'spirits.' The rendering of the Greek by winds is very rare in the New Testament, and is indeed found only here, and possibly in John iii. 8. In ver. 14, the angels are expressly called 'ministering *spirits*'—a name that recalls both the names given in ver. 7, spirits and ministers. They are His workmanship, not His sons; and they are all either 'spirits' or material elements, or as material elements; 'a flame of fire,' an allusion perhaps to a Jewish interpretation of seraphim—'the burning ones.' On the whole, therefore, the A. V. seems preferable to the marginal rendering.

Ver. 8. But whatever the difficulties in the minute interpretation of those verses, the general sense is clear. Angels are all subordinate; while to Christ are given names of a very different import—God and Lord, and highest dignities—a sceptre and a throne, a kingdom.—**A sceptre of righteousness**, or rather of **uprightness**, as the word is translated in the Old Testament. If this change be made, it may then be said that righteous, righteousness, just, justify, justification, are throughout the New Testament forms of the same Greek word. His character befits His kingdom. His is a sceptre of uprightness. He loves righteousness and hates iniquity, showing herein the very nature of the Father.

Ver. 9. The dignity of the God-man He owes to His Father. God anointed Him as King and Priest, and gave Him honours such as kings, prophets, priests—His 'fellows,' associates that is, not necessarily equals—never knew. He therefore is now the One Priest, the King of kings and Lord of lords (see Eph. i. 21). This supremacy is a joy to all who trust and obey Him. Nay, the earth itself is called to rejoice because He reigneth. The anointing oil that consecrates Messiah Priest and King is oil of gladness indeed!

Of these quotations, ver. 8 is taken from Ps. xlv., which Jewish commentators maintain to be written of the Messiah; ver. 9 is taken from a passage that speaks of Solomon, and of Christ as antitype; and ver. 10 is taken from a Psalm (cii. 25–27) that seems to speak of Jehovah only; and yet vers. 13–16 of that Psalm are connected with the Messianic kingdom. Creating power and immortality are here ascribed to the Son, as in ver. 13 universal empire is given to Him. The quotation in ver. 13 is from Psalm cx., a strictly Messianic Psalm (see Matt. xxii. 43, 44).

Ver. 11. **They all**, *i.e.* the heavens and the earth. The language and the imagery are taken largely from Isa. xxxiv. 4 and li. 6.

Ver. 12. **As a mantle shalt thou roll them up, as a garment also shall they be changed**—a quotation from Ps. cii., with the words 'as a garment' added, on the authority of the best MSS. The heavens and the earth are to be rolled up as done with, and they are to be changed for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Ver. 13. **Sit thou**, etc., from Ps. cx. 1. The right hand is the place of authority and honour. Thy footstool, lit. a footstool of thy feet—not a resting-place for the feet, but what is to be trodden under by them. The application of this Psalm to the Messiah is accepted by the Jews, as appears from the Targums and other Jewish writings, is affirmed by Christ (Matt. xxii. 43–46) and by His apostles (Acts ii. 34, 35; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Eph. i. 20–23), and by different passages in this Epistle. Whom else could David acknowledge as his Lord? and to whom else did God swear that he should be a priest for ever?

Ver. 14. **Are they not all ministering spirits?**—a blending in reverse order of the expressions found in ver. 7. The play upon the words 'ministering spirits sent forth to minister' is not in the Greek. The original is simply 'ministering spirits continually sent forth on (or for) service.' The word here rendered 'ministering' is used in N. T. to express the temple service; and the word rendered 'ministry' or service is a form of the word that expresses deaconship or subordinate service generally. The worship and the work of angels is carried on in the great temple of nature and grace, and their service originates in the needs and claims of those who are soon to possess complete salvation. Of their ministry, for the benefit of all who believe, we have many examples under both Testaments. It is none the less real now that it is unseen.

CHAP. II. 1–4. These verses are closely connected with the first chapter, and scarcely less closely with the subsequent verses of the second. It is characteristic of these warnings and exhortations that they never interrupt the thought. They spring naturally from what precedes, and lead as naturally to what follows.

Ver. 1. **We have heard**, rather '[the things] heard,' an expression less definite, and intended to include all that was spoken by our Lord and by His servants, whatever was heard by them and reported to us, or directly by ourselves. The dignity of the messenger adds greatly to the responsibility of those who hear the message (Mark xii. 6).—**Lest haply, possibly, we drift away from them.** The A. V. ('let them slip') is, in a general sense, accurate; but it fails to represent the figure, and conceals part of the lesson. It is not the truths of the Gospel that slip away, but we who slip or 'fleten' past them, as Wicliffe expressed it. The word well describes the subtle power of temptation. We have simply to do nothing, and we shall be carried along to our ruin. To fall away requires no effort. To stand firm, to hold stedfast, is the difficulty.

Ver. 2. **The word spoken by** (rather, through or in the midst of) **angels.** If the attendance of angels at the giving of the Law added force and dignity to the precepts of that economy, how much greater is the honour and the authority of the Gospel which was given by Him whom angels worship and serve (chap. i. 6–14)! The ministration of angels in giving the Law is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture (see parallel passages in the margin of the text), though not at great length. Josephus speaks of it more distinctly (*Antiq.* xv. 5, § 3), and Wetstein quotes Jewish authorities which speak of 'the angels of service' whom Moses saw. In Gal. iii. 19 this ministration is referred to as a mark of the inferiority of the law. In Acts vii. 53 the contrast seems to be between a law given by man and one having higher authority. Such allusions, however, must be carefully distinguished from passages that speak of the 'angel of His presence' in whom was God's name—'the messenger of the covenant'—passages that refer, though dimly, to the Son of God Himself (see Pye Smith and Dorner).—**Was stedfast,**

rather, became or proved to be stedfast, *i.e.* the command was confirmed in authority and obligation by the punishment of transgressors.—**Transgression and disobedience.** Every violation of the command is here included: all actual transgression of the law in the first, and all neglect or contempt of divine precepts in the second. Ethically the two mental states involve each the other. Commissions and omissions are both transgressions and disobedience. The first are things done in violation of law; the second are things left undone in violation of law also—the neglect, for example, spoken of in the following verse.—**Recompence of reward** is a happy tautology. What is given back to a man in return for what he has done, whether good or bad, is the meaning of the Greek, as it is the meaning of both expressions in old English, though both are now used in a good sense only. (See Ps. xciv. 2.)

Ver. 3. **By the Lord,** rather through, by the instrumentality of. When instrumentality is clearly expressed in the context, as when it is said, 'By whom He made the worlds' (chap. i. 2), no change is needed; but when, as here, 'by' is ambiguous, making it uncertain whether it describes a mere *agent* or the *originating cause*, it is important to mark the distinction. The Lord is here regarded as the divine messenger, whose message God Himself attested (ver. 4).—**The Lord.** The title thus given to Christ has special dignity, and is not common in this Epistle, being found only in vii. 14, xiii. 20, and perhaps in xii. 14. It is the word used in the Septuagint to translate Jehovah.—**Was confirmed unto us** has been quoted to prove that Paul did not write this Epistle, he having affirmed elsewhere that he received his doctrine directly from Christ Himself (Gal. i. 12; 1 Cor. ix. 1, etc.) There is, however, no inconsistency. The writer is here speaking of the Gospel as attested by many human witnesses whom he, and those he is addressing, had heard.—**So great salvation.** Nothing is said here of the greatness of the salvation beyond the qualities immediately named (comp. Greek ἥτις), viz. that the Gospel began with the teaching of the Lord, and was confirmed by the testimony and experience of those that heard it; still further by the variety and the diffusion of miraculous and spiritual gifts—God's own witnesses. A gospel originated in this way, and sustained by such evidence, has the strongest claim on our attention. The primary evidence of Christianity is Christ and Christians—the character of Him who first taught it, and next the testimony of men who have believed it, and who can tell of its fitness to bring peace and to produce holiness; and all this evidence is permanent, as clear and as strong now as in the first age.—**Neglect.** The sin rebuked here is not the rejection of the Gospel or contempt of it. It is simply neglect or indifference. The hearers did not care to examine the truths and duties it revealed. Tell men what God is and what God has done to make them happy and good, and the character of men is as fully tested by their indifference as by their formal rejection of the truth. Not to care about a message of reconciliation and holiness decides the character and the destiny of many who have heard but will not regard. We have only to 'neglect' salvation and we lose it, as in the previous verse we have only to take no heed; and we are carried away to our ruin in both cases.

Ver. 4. **God also bearing them witness,** *i.e.* God bearing witness with them to the Gospel they preached, confirming their word by the signs that followed (Mark xvi. 20).—**With signs, wonders, and miracles.** This is the threefold division of the miraculous acts which prove the superhuman mission of those who work them. As 'miracles' (δυνάμεις), they display Divine power; as 'wonders,' they excite surprise; as 'signs' (St. John's usual word), they supply evidence which remains after the sensuous excitement of miraculous power has passed away—evidence which is the usual proof and accompaniment of a divine revelation (2 Cor. xii. 12).—**The gifts of the Holy Ghost** are illustrated in their diversity (to one man one gift; to another, another) in 1 Cor. xii. 4-11, God Himself distributing them (as in First Corinthians it is the Holy Ghost who is said to distribute them) according to His own will.

CHAPTER II. 5-18.

The excellency of the New Dispensation further proved by Christ's superiority to Angels as Son of Man, who is made supreme, and is eminently fitted for His office as suffering Saviour and sympathizing Friend.

5 FOR unto the angels hath he not[1] put in subjection [a]the
6 world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain
place testified, saying,

[b]What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?
7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels;
Thou crownedst him with glory and honour,

[a] Ch. vi. 5; 2 Pet. iii. 13

[b] Job vii. 17; Ps. viii. 4, &c., cxliv. 3

[1] For not unto angels did (or hath) he

And didst set him over the works of thy hands:

8 [c] Thou hast [2] put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is* not put [3] under him. But now [d] we see not yet all
9 things put [3] under him. But we see Jesus, [e] who was made a little lower than the angels for [4] the suffering of death [f] crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should
10 taste death [g] for every man. [h] For it became him, [i] for whom *are* all things, and by [5] whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make [k] the captain [6] of their salvation
11 [l] perfect through sufferings. For [m] both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified [n] *are* all of one: for which cause [o] he is
12 not ashamed to call them brethren, saying,

[p] I will declare thy name unto my brethren,
In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. [7]

13 And again, [q] I will put my trust in him. And again, [r] Behold,
14 I and the children [s] which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, [8] he [t] also himself likewise [9] took part of the same; [u] that through death he might destroy [10] him that had [11] the power of death, that is,
15 the devil; and deliver them who [v] through fear of death were
16 all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on *him the nature of* [12] angels; but he took on *him* [13] the [w] seed
17 of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him [x] to be made like unto *his* [y] brethren, that he might be [z] a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make
18 reconciliation [14] for the sins of the people. [a] For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

[c] Mat. xxviii. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 27; Eph. i. 22; ch. i. 13.
[d] 1 Cor. xv. 25.
[e] Phil. ii. 7, 8, 9.
[f] Acts ii. 33.
[g] Jo. iii. 16, xii. 32; Rom. v. 18, viii. 32; 2 Cor. v. 15; 1 Tim. ii. 6; 1 Jo. ii. 2; Rev. v. 9.
[h] Lu. xxiv. 46.
[i] Rom. xi. 36.
[k] Acts iii. 15, v. 31; ch. xii. 2.
[l] Lu. xiii. 32; ch v. 9.
[m] Ch. x. 10, 14.
[n] Acts xvii. 26.
[o] Mat. xxviii. 10; Jo. xx. 17; Rom. viii. 29.
[p] Ps. xxii. (xxi.) 22, 25.
[q] Ps. xviii. 2; Isa. xii. 2.
[r] Isa. viii. 18.
[s] Jo. x. 29, xvii. 6, 9, 11, 12.
[t] Jo. i. 14; Rom. viii. 3; Phil. ii. 7.
[u] 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55; Col. ii. 15; 2 Tim. i. 10.
[v] Lu. i. 74; Rom. viii. 15; 2 Tim. i. 7.
[w] Isa. xli. 8.
[x] Ps. xxii. (xxi.) 22.
[y] Phil. ii. 7.
[z] Ch. iv. 15, v. 1, 2.
[a] Ch. iv 15, 16, v. 2, vii. 25.

[2] didst [3] *i.e.*, in subjection, *the same word as before in vers.* 5 *and* 8
[4] *rather*, But him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, we behold, *even* Jesus, because of [5] through, *etc.* [6] *rather*, author
[7] *or*, congregation will I praise thee, *as in Ps.* xxii. 22 [8] *or*, blood and flesh
[9] *i.e.*, in like manner, *literally*, nearly in the same manner or degree
[10] bring to nought [11] hath
[12] assuredly he taketh not hold of, *i.e.* to rescue [13] taketh hold of
[14] in order to make propitiation *or* atonement

Ver. 5. **For.** This verse introduces a new proof of the superiority of the Gospel; but it is also connected with what precedes. The most natural explanation is to connect the 'for' with i. 14. Angels are not sons: they are ministering spirits appointed only to serve. Not unto angels is the government of men under the Gospel committed. The new dispensation economy, the kingdom of God, the order of things under the Messiah, is committed to man, as was the world of old (Ps. viii.); to the model man, however, the ideal man, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. The name, 'the world to come' (see note on i. 2), was quite familiar to the Jews, who called their own economy 'this world,' and was used after the Jewish economy had practically ceased (comp. Matt. xii. 32), as Christ Himself is called, even after He had come, 'the Coming One' (Rom. v. 14). This world of the future was already introduced; but the description was still appropriate, and is used again in this Epistle (ix. 10, 11, x. 1), partly because it was the name that described the hope of the Jews, and partly because the temple was still standing. Some regard the name as applying to the new heaven and the new earth, some to the heavenly state itself. It really includes them both, only it is wider, and applies to the whole order of things and to the government of men (see Gr.) under the Messiah. (See chap. vi. 5.)

Ver. 6. **But one in a certain place.** Some one somewhere testifies. This is not the language of uncertainty nor even of indefiniteness. It is a common formula found in Philo and, as Schoetgenius shows, in Jewish writers, when they quote from what is supposed to be well known to their readers. Some one, you know who, in a certain place, you know where. The expression is found only here and in chap. iv. 4.—**What is man . . . or the son of man?** Both expressions point in the original passage to man as fallen and feeble. It is human nature that is thus honoured—human nature, not probably in its original state, but as subject to death because of sin, the chief quality in which angels excel men. This human nature God crowns and makes supreme over the work of His hands—a supremacy one day to be made complete in the person of our Lord.—**A little lower** may (in the Hebrew and Greek) mean a little in degree (as in Prov. xv. 16; Heb. xiii. 22), or for a little [time] (as in Ps. xxxvii. 10). If spoken of man as originally created, it means *a little;* if spoken of man as humbled, brought down through sin and the penalty due to it, and spoken of Christ as incarnate, it may mean *for a little.* 'A little lower,' however, is the more probable meaning both in the Psalm and in this passage. Both senses are true of man as fallen and redeemed, and of Christ as incarnate and suffering.—**Than the angels.** This is the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew of the Psalm. The original may mean 'than God,' or than 'the Divine,' as we say. The expression is applied in Scripture to magistrates and rulers, who are 'hedged round with a Divinity,' and the word is rendered 'than kings' in the Chaldee paraphrase. The translation 'than angels' is sanctioned by most of the Jewish commentators (see Gill), and is to be preferred, unless we take 'than the Divine,' the Hebrew plural form admitting this abstract sense (see chap. i. 6). —**Thou hast set him,** etc. These words are omitted by some ancient authorities and by the earlier critical editors (*vide* Griesbach, etc.); but the preponderance of evidence is now in favour of retaining them. The supremacy they describe was given to Adam after his creation (Gen. i. 28), and again to Noah after the fall (ix. 2).

'Lord, what is man? extremes how wide
In his mysterious nature join:
The flesh to worms and dust allied,
The soul immortal and divine!

'But Jesus, in amazing grace,
Assumed our nature as His own,
Obeyed and suffered in our place,
Then took it with Him to His throne.

Nearest the throne, and first in song,
Man shall His hallelujahs raise;
While wondering angels round Him throng,
And swell the chorus of His praise.'

Vers. 8, 9. The supremacy is certainly promised, and is intended to be complete; for nothing is excepted, though as yet (ver. 9) the promise is imperfectly fulfilled. The humiliation is clear enough, and the crowning with glory is begun. By and by there will be universal subjection, and He will be universal king. Meanwhile we may well turn from the imperfect conquest which it is so easy to see, and contemplate (see Gr.) the great spectacle—Jesus made man, tasting death for men, crowned, and awaiting His full reward. From that spectacle suffering Christians will gather fresh patience and faith. This use of the expression, 'subject to Him,' and its application to Christ, is found only in Paul's Epistles: 1 Cor. xv. 27; Eph. i. 22; Phil. iii. 21. The words, 'for the suffering of death,' are connected by the ablest scholars (Tyndale, De Wette, Winer, etc.) with the words that follow: 'because of the suffering of death He was crowned,' as in Phil. ii. 9; and this rendering is all but essential if we are to do justice to the Greek (διὰ with the accusative expressing an actual existing reason, not an end to be gained). To connect them with the previous clause, 'a little lower,' etc., as if dying were the purpose of His humiliation, is to do violence to the original, and to anticipate and so repeat the thought of the next clause, 'that He might taste death for every man.' 'To taste death' is a common Hebraism for to die (Matt. xvi. 28; John viii. 52). *Merely* to taste is sometimes the meaning of the Latin gustare, but that meaning must not be pressed here. In classic Greek, the phrase means to give oneself up to; but the Hebrew meaning 'to die' is nearer the truth, with the added idea, perhaps, that He experienced and felt it, and so came to understand more fully what death is. . . . And yet all this suffering—the ground of our Saviour's honour and exaltation—was by God's grace. Herein is love, love in its noblest form, that God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. If God Himself be not deeply concerned in this work, if the Divine nature have no share in what Christ did and suffered, the whole teaching of Scripture is confounded; and for our salvation we owe more to a 'man' than to the blessed God. God is outdone by a creature in the exercise of His noblest perfections, and that in the very dispensation which was intended to reveal them.—**For every man**; rather, for every one. The extent, the design, and the effect of the death of Christ have been, as is well known, the subjects of great controversy. Some hold that He so died for all, that all are to be saved by Him; others, that He died only for all whom the Father gave Him; and others, that He died for all, inasmuch as His sufferings and death remove the obstacles to the pardon of sinners which are created by the character and government of God. The question is partly verbal, and may be raised in relation to all God's gifts—the Bible, the means of grace, blessings of every kind. The thing that may be safely affirmed here is that the explicit teaching of this Epistle makes it impossible to accept these words in the first sense. Those who are saved by His death are 'the sanctified,' 'the brethren,' 'the many sons;' not those who reject the Gospel and die in unbelief; and yet so large a company made heirs of blessings, moreover, so numerous, so varied, and so lasting, that if the dignity of His person gives value to His sacrifice, the efficacy of His sacrifice reflects back a glorious light on the dignity of His person.

Ver. 10, etc. **It became him.** This arrangement (whereby one made lower than the angels was to be supreme) was not only in harmony with God's intention, as foreshadowed in nature and revealed in Scripture; it was in itself befitting. It was worthy of God, and it completed the Saviour's qualifications for His office. In this way He, as sin-bearer, cleanses us from sin, and stands in the same relation to God as those who are to be cleansed. He becomes their brother, pays to the same Father the same tribute of grateful praise,

exercises the same trust as they, and presents them with Himself completely redeemed (vers. 11–13). Meanwhile His mercy, His faithfulness, His help are all perfected through the experience and the sufferings He has undergone (16–18).—**It became him**, *i.e.* God, who is Himself deeply concerned in His great work, for whom are all things, and this among them.—**For whom are all things**, etc. The same language (which is found elsewhere in N. T. only in Paul's writings) is applied with characteristic differences to God (Rom. xi. 36) and to Christ (Col. i. 6; 1 Cor. viii. 6).—**In bringing** is the right rendering, though 'having brought' is a possible meaning of the tense form. The words refer not to the saints of the old economy chiefly, but to all who are being saved. The saints of old—David, Israel, etc.—typified Christ in their sufferings: to Him, therefore, they were conformed. But we as well as they. And as it is to the coming glory the writer refers, the words are eminently true of us.—**Captain**, translated elsewhere author (Heb. xii. 2), and prince (Acts v. 31), means properly originator or author, and so sometimes leader.—**Perfect**: that is, in His office as Saviour. The personal perfection in obedience which He learned through suffering is touched later (chap. v. 2). . . . Sanctification includes all that is needed to make men fit for the service of God—freedom from guilt, and personal holiness.—**Of one**, *i.e.* not of the same race, but of one Father; not in the sense in which the race are said to be God's 'offspring,' but in the deeper sense of the Divine sonship which begins in our case with spiritual renewal, the sonship which begins with the second birth, not the first, when men are begotten again by the Father, by the Spirit, through the truth.

Ver. 12. **The church.** The Old Testament name is the congregation. But in modern usage the congregation is one thing, and the church is another; and it is the church that best represents the sense, the exact meaning of the original and the force of the argument.

Ver. 13. **I will put my trust in him.** Christ's oneness with us is not only proved by the fact that we have one Father and are brothers, all 'partakers of a Divine nature,' but by the further fact that we have the same trials and struggles, and faith—the principle of our spiritual life. The brotherhood, moreover, that begins on His part with His incarnation and sufferings (ver. 12; see Ps. xxii.) continues till His work is complete, and all the children, Himself and we, are presented perfect before God (ver. 13; see Isa. viii. 18).

Ver. 14. **He himself likewise.** The Greek word here is not easily rendered. It implies great likeness without absolute identity; very closely like, and absolutely like so far as flesh and blood are concerned. He partook *in the main* of our nature. His was an actual incarnation—Jesus Christ in the flesh (1 John iv. 2), but with the difference which His personal sinlessness implied. The word rebukes the Doketism (the mere *appearance* of a human nature) of the early heresies, the mythical dreams of Strauss and other modern inquirers, but without admitting that He was in every respect as man is, still less that He was only man.

Ver. 15. **Through death.** The Fathers and the later commentators (Bengel notably) delight in marking how Christ destroyed death by dying, and cast out the prince of the world—the king of death—on the cross, the weakness proving as often to be the power of God.—**He might destroy** is too strong; abolish, bring to nought, render of none effect, neutralize the power of, permanently paralyze, take away the occupation of, are all nearer the meaning. It is a favourite word of St. Paul, who uses it twenty-five times in his acknowledged Epistles. It occurs, besides, only here and in Luke xiii. 7.—**Subject to bondage.** Aristotle calls death 'the most fearful of all fearful things;' and ancient believers often looked upon it with dread. Even now Christians are freed from this dread only by a firm faith in Christ's victory over it, and by a clear insight into the significancy of His dying. Christ died not for His own sins, but for ours. If by faith we are one with Him, death is no longer the penalty of sin: it is only the completion of our holiness and the way into the blessed life above.

Ver. 16. **Verily** is feeble, as is even *assuredly*. The word means, it is known, admitted, and admitted everywhere; it is nowhere questioned.—**He took not on him**; rather, 'on angels (or in later English, of angels) He laid not hold,' but on the seed of Abraham He laid hold, *i.e.* to help and save them (see the same word in Heb. viii. 9). It is not angels whom Christ delivers (ver. 15), nor is it angels He succours (ver. 18), but the seed of Abraham, the theocratic name of the people of God peculiar to Paul. This is now generally accepted as the meaning of the verse. In the early Church the phrase 'took not on Him' was applied pretty generally, as in the Authorized Version, to the assumption of a human nature, and so it was understood by Calvin, Luther, Owen, and others. The active voice of the same Greek verb (here it is in the middle) is used by Greek writers in the sense of assuming a nature. But the tense is *present*, the voice is middle, and the word 'nature' is not expressed, and can hardly be supplied, so that we seem shut up to the meaning which is admittedly found in Heb. viii. 9, and in other sixteen places where it is used in N. T., including 1 Tim. vi. 19, and seven passages in the Acts.

Ver. 17. **It behoved him.** The word expresses moral fitness and consequent obligation, as in Heb. v. 3, 12, based on the nature of His mediatorial work.—**In all things like**, *i.e.* all things essential to His mediation. The exception, 'without sin,' is expressed later (chap. iv. 15), and is less necessary here because of the limitation implied in ver. 14.

A merciful and faithful high priest. The Greek may mean that 'he may be merciful and a faithful high priest,' but the quality of mercy in the priest is really part of the thought. How much we need a merciful high priest, as well as one who shall be faithful to his trust, is shown by the preceding description of our state. It is the one quality which is needed to win men to God. God knew, no doubt, what our guilt and sufferings were, and felt them; but we needed proof that He knew and felt in order that we might trust in His mercy. This proof is supplied by Christ as incarnate, and perhaps Christ as incarnate and suffering became capable of higher sympathy than the blessed God Himself. — **To make reconciliation for the sins of the people.** It is unfortunate that this Old Testament expression is used in the N. T. only here, while the expression commonly used in N. T. to

express the same Greek word, 'propitiation,' is not found in the O. T. at all. It will help the reader if he note that 'atonement for,' 'reconciliation for,' 'propitiation for,' are all forms of one and the same Greek word and of one and the same Hebrew word. When followed by the word 'sin' or its equivalent, the Hebrew and Greek mean to make atonement for; when followed by a word describing a person, they mean to pacify or appease, to make propitiation, with special reference to the moral sentiment of justice or right in the person appeased. This double sense pervades all the teaching of both Testaments.

Ver. 18. **In that he suffered, being tempted,** is on the whole the best rendering of the Greek. It may admit of a limited sense, 'In that wherein He suffered, being tempted,' or, 'having been tempted in what He suffered.' The first sense includes these senses and others too. And the wider the meaning we give the words, the greater the justice that is done by them to the completeness of the fitness of Christ to win our confidence and to help us by His sympathy and grace.

It may aid the reader of this Epistle to gather lessons for himself if we note briefly some of the hints which are suggested by these first two chapters—doctrinal, practical, and homiletic.

DOCTRINAL HINTS.

In this Epistle, as in the Gospel of John, the doctrine is based on the Divine nature of Christ, and on His incarnation. As in the Gospel (i. 1–18) it is said that the Word was God and became flesh, and this double truth pervades the book, so in the Hebrews the Deity and the humanity of the Son form the foundation of the entire treatise, and give strength and consistency to its teaching. The double truth is not worked as a pattern on the surface, it forms part of the texture.

In this last dispensation God is said to speak to us in His Son. The Son is the medium of the revelation. As revealer He has as His associates the apostles. But this office of Christ is quite subordinate. His true character is that He is Himself *the revelation*. To know God and His Son Jesus Christ is eternal life. God in Christ, Christ as God,—redeeming, renewing, sanctifying,—is the saving doctrine of the Gospel.

There is a double Trinity in Scripture—the Trinity of the Old Testament: the Trinity of the eternity that precedes the incarnation, wherein Christ shares the glory He had with the Father, wherein He made the worlds; the Trinity of the New Testament, wherein He, as incarnate Son of God, becomes Messianic King, and regains with accumulated honours His original glory—the second founded on the first, revealing it in clearer colours, with greater tenderness, and in closer relation to ourselves; again, perhaps, to become subordinate to the first, when God Himself in His essential nature shall be all in all (chaps. i. and ii.).

PRACTICAL HINTS.

I. 1. God is the chief teacher of the Church, and what He taught of old has still its authority and its lessons even under the Gospel (vers. 5, 8, etc.).

I. 2. The author of the Old Testament is also the author of the New. It is God who gives Christ the supremacy. To put Moses or some 'son of David' above Christ is to disobey God. *By whom:* Christ, then, is a distinct person from the Father, and yet He is Creator of all things.

I. 3. As the sun is manifested only by its effulgence, so the Father is revealed to us by Him who is Light *of* Light, God *of* God. He who upholds all things is our Redeemer and sacrifice. The atonement of sin is effected not by our doings or sufferings, but by Christ, and was completed by Him before He ascended. . . .

I. 4. Names are qualities and character when God gives them. . . . To give angels the worship that is due to Christ is to frustrate the Divine purpose, and to give to the servant what belongs only to the Son or the Father.

I. 5. In the first age of the Church, Scripture determined what was truth, and that is its province still.

II. 2, 3. Not to believe the Gospel is a greater sin than to break the law. . . . When men are *warned* or exhorted, the *first* person is more impressive than the second, 'How shall *we* escape?'

4. The rejection of the Gospel is rejection of the doctrine which Christ and His apostles preached. Post-apostolic doctrine has no *Divine* authority. . . . The doctrine is Divine which miracles confirm; the miracles are false when the doctrine they support is not Divine.

II. 6, 7. The Gospel, which is sometimes said to libel human nature,—so darkly does it paint our character,—gives man highest dignities, and raises him to the greatest blessedness.

II. 9. Faith is *insight*, and sees much that to the unbelieving remains unseen.

II. 11. The poorest, feeblest Christian who is sanctified and believes is recognised by Christ as a 'brother.'

II. 13. Christ Himself is a believer, one with us in the covenant of grace. He lived a life of faith even as we.

II. 15. There is a natural fear of death in man not always felt, but easily wakened. Christ's death delivers man from the danger of death, and from the fear of it. None but the true Christian is really free.

HOMILETIC HINTS.

I. 1, 2. Revelation progressive and complete. (Trench, Titcomb). The possibility and necessity, the certainty, the characters, the methods, the perfections of Divine revelation (B. W. Williams). Divine revelation variously communicated (Dr. Ryland). The personal ministry of Christ a revelation of God (Chandler). The Gospel preached under the Old Testament (Mather).

I. 1–4. How the New Testament fulfils the Old (Maurice).

I. 1–12. The Son, the Creator and Ruler of the worlds (Bishop Hobart).

I. 3. Providence (Dr. Collinges). Christ's sufferings the purging of sin (Is. Ambrose). The Feast of the Ascension.

5, 6. Messiah the Son of God. Messiah worshipped by angels (John Newton). The adoration of Christ vindicated from the charge of idolatry (Pye Smith). The similarity and contrasts of the first and second advents (Auriol).

8. Christ's sceptre on earth a sceptre of uprightness and a source of gladness (J. H. Stewart).

13, 14. The nature and ministry of holy angels

(H. Wilkinson, W. H. Mill). Michaelmas (Bishop Bull, Tillotson, Conybeare, Wesley, R. Hall).

II. 1. The great danger of carelessness in religion (Stillingfleet, Chalmers, Guthrie).

3. The great salvation (Keach, Conant, J. Superville, S. Walker, E. Cooper, Melville, etc.).

4. Miraculous evidence as proof of the truth of the Gospel (Collyer, Maltby, Conybeare, etc.).

5–9. The 'world to come' subject to Christ (M'Neile). The just prerogative of human nature (Dr. Snape).

8. Missions (R. Wilberforce). Succour in Christ for the tempted (H. Alford).

9, 10. The reasons and end of the sufferings of Christ. Sufferings necessary to perfection (Jones of Nayland). Good Friday (S. Walker, Jay). Christ (rather God) preparing His people for glory (Blunt). Christ made perfect through suffering (Sheppard and Vaughan).

11. The mystery of godliness (Newman). The condescension of Christ (Balmer).

14. The incarnation and its design (Dr. Peddie, Simeon).

14, 15. The fear of death (Saurin, Three Sermons), and deliverance from it (Usher, Bishop Hall, Dr. Bates, P. Norris, Dr. M'Crie).

16. Fallen man redeemed (South, Berriman). Discriminating mercy (Hyatt).

16–18. The merciful High Priest (M'Cheyne).

17. The incarnation of Christ and its purpose. The reconciliation of sinners by the death of Christ (Winchester).

18. Christ's temptations (Girdlestone). Christ's power to succour the tempted (Simeon).

CHAPS. I. and II. Christ's divinity and humanity, and the bearing of each on redemption and on human feeling.

CHAPTER III. 1–IV. 16.

The excellency of the Christian Dispensation proved by Christ's superiority to Moses, 1–6.—The duty of Faith and Stedfastness enforced by the example of Israel, 7–19.—Still further enforced, iv. 1–13.—The hopes supplied by contemplation of the Tenderness and Power of Christ, 14–16.

1 WHEREFORE, holy brethren, partakers of [a]the[1] heavenly calling, consider [b]the Apostle and High Priest of our
2 profession, Christ[2] Jesus; who[3] was faithful to him that appointed[4] him, as also [c]Moses *was faithful* in all his house.
3 For this *man*[5] was[6] counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch[7] as [d]he who hath builded[8] the house hath more
4 honour than the house. For every house is builded by some
5 *man*;[9] but [e]he that built all things *is* God. [f]And Moses verily[9] *was* faithful in all his[11] house, as [g]a servant, [h]for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;[10]
6 but Christ as [i]a son over his own[11] house; [k]whose house are we, [l]if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the[12]
7 hope firm unto the end. Wherefore (as [m]the Holy Ghost saith,

[m]"To-day if ye will[13] hear his voice,

8 Harden not your hearts, [e]as in the provocation,
In[14] the day of temptation in the wilderness:
9 When[15] your fathers tempted me, proved me,[16]
And saw my works forty years.
10 Wherefore I was grieved with that[17] generation,

[a] Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; Eph. iv. 1; Phil. iii. 14; 2 Thes. i. 11; 2 Tim. i. 9; 2 Pet. i. 10.
[b] Rom. xv. 8; ch. ii. 17, iv. 14, v. 5, vi. 20, viii. 1, ix. 11, x. 21.
[c] Ver. 5; Num. xii. 7
[d] Zech. vi. 12 Mat. xvi. 18.
[e] Eph. ii. 10, iii. 9; ch. i. 2.
[f] Ver. 2.
[g] Ex. xiv. 31; Num. xii. 7; Deut. iii. 24; Josh. i. 2, viii. 31.
[h] Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19.
[i] Ch. i. 2.
[k] 1 Cor. iii. 16 vi. 19; 2 Cor vi. 16; Eph. ii. 21, 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 5.
[l] Ver. 14; Lu. viii. 15; Rom. v. 2; 1 Cor. xi. 2; Col. i. 23; 1 Thes. v. 21; ch. vi 11, x. 35.
[m] 2 Sam. xxiii. 2; Acts i. 16.
[n] Ver. 15; Ps. xcv. (xciv.) 7-11.
[o] Deut. xxxiii 8; Ex. xvii. 1-7; Num. xx. 1-13.

[1] a
[2] *omit* Christ
[3] how that he (*lit.* being as he)
[4] made
[5] *Gr.* he [this personage]
[6] hath been [is]
[7] insomuch
[8] built (*or* established) by some one
[9] indeed, *or untr.* simply calling attention to the contrast in ver. 6
[10] afterwards to be spoken
[11] *rather*, his (*i.e.* God's)
[12] the glorying (or exultation) of our hope
[13] *omit* will
[14] like as in
[15] where, *or* wherein
[16] *read*, tempted and proved me; *Gr.* by proving *me*
[17] *read* this

And said, They do alway err in *their* heart;
And they have not known my ways:
11 So[16] I sware in my wrath,
They shall not enter into my rest.)
12 take heed, brethren, lest there be in any[19] of you an evil heart
13 of unbelief, in departing[20] from the living God. But exhort one
another daily, while it is called To-day;[21] lest any[19] of you be
14 hardened through[22] the deceitfulness of sin. For we are
made[23] partakers of Christ, [e] if we hold the beginning of our [e] Ver. 6.
15 confidence stedfast unto the end; while it is said,
[f] To-day if ye will[24] hear his voice, [f] Ver. 7.
Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.
16 [r] For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all [r] Num. xiv. 2, 4, 11, 24, 30; Deut. i. 34, 36, 38.
17 that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he
grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned,
18 [s] whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And [t] to whom sware [s] Num. xiv. 29, etc., xxvi. 65; Ps. cvi. 26; 1 Cor. x. 5; Jude 5.
he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that
19 believed not?[25] [u] So we see that they could not enter in [t] Num. xiv. 30. Deut. i. 34, 35.
because of unbelief.
CHAP. IV. 1. Let [v] us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us*[26] [u] Ch. iv. 6.
of entering into his rest, any[19] of you should seem to come[27] [v] Ch. xii. 15.
2 short of it. For unto us was the gospel[28] preached, as well as
unto them: but the word preached[29] did not profit them, not
3 being mixed with faith in[30] them that heard *it*. [w] For we [w] Ch. iii. 14.
which have believed do enter into rest, as he said,[31]
[x] As I have sworn in my wrath, [x] Ps. xcv. 11; ch. iii. 11.
If they shall[32] enter into my rest:
although the works were finished [y] from the foundation of the [y] Gen. ii. 2.
4 world: for he spake[33] in a certain place of the seventh *day* on
this wise, [z] And God did rest the seventh day from all his [z] Gen. ii. 2; Ex. xx. 11, xxxi. 17.
5 works. And in this *place* again,
[a] If they shall[32] enter into my rest. [a] Ps. xcv. (xciv.) 11.
6 Seeing therefore it remaineth[34] that some must[35] enter therein,
[b] and they to whom it was first preached[36] entered not in [b] ch. iii. 19.
7 because of unbelief:[37] Again, he limiteth[38] a certain day,
saying in David,
To-day, after so long a time; as it is said,[39]

[16] As [19] any one. [20] *Gr.* apostatizing
[21] *or*, while To-day is called (*in your hearing*) [22] by [23] become
[24] *omit* will [25] disbelieved, *or* were disobedient
[26] remaining, *or* being left over (*see ver.* 6)
[27] to have come [28] glad tidings, *or* a gospel [29] heard; *Gr.* of hearing
[30] *rather*, because they were not united (mingled) by faith with
[31] that rest, even as he hath said [32] they shall not, as in ch. iii. 11
[33] hath spoken [34] still remaineth [35] for some to
[36] who formerly heard the glad tidings, *or* the gospel (see ver. 2)
[37] disobedience, *or* disbelief [38] *or* defineth
[39] *or*, a long time after, 'To-day' (*read*, as hath been before said)

[c] To-day if ye will [40] hear his voice,
Harden not your hearts.

8 For if Jesus [41] had given them rest, then would he not after-
9 ward have spoken [42] of another day. There remaineth [43] there-
10 fore a rest to [44] the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath [d] ceased [45] from his own works, as [46] God
11 *did* from his. Let us labour [47] therefore to enter into that rest,
12 lest any man fall [e] after [48] the same example of unbelief.[49] For the word of God *is* [f] quick,[50] and powerful,[51] and [g] sharper than any [h] two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the [52] joints and marrow, and *is* [i] a
13 discerner [53] of the thoughts and intents of the heart. [k] Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked [l] and opened unto [54] the eyes of him with
14 whom we have to do. Seeing then that we have [55] [m] a great high priest, [n] that is passed into [56] the heavens, Jesus the Son of
15 God, [o] let us hold fast *our* profession. For [p] we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our [57] infirmities; but [q] was [58] in all points tempted like as *we are*,
16 [r] *yet* without sin. [s] Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.[59]

[c] Ps. xcv. 7; ch. iii. 7.

[d] Gen. ii. 2.

[e] Ch. iii. 12, 18, 19.
[f] Isa. xlix. 2; Jer. xxiii. 29; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; 1 Pet. i. 23.
[g] Prov. v. 4.
[h] Eph. vi. 17; Rev. i. 16, ii. 16.
[i] 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.
[k] Ps. xxxiii. 13, 14, xc. 8, cxxxix. 11, 12.
[l] Job xxvi. 6, xxxiv. 21; Prov. xv. 11.
[m] Ch. iii. 1.
[n] Ch. vii. 26, ix. 12, 24.
[o] Ch. x. 23.
[p] Isa. liii. 3; ch. ii. 18.
[q] Lu. xxii. 28.
[r] 2 Cor. v. 21; ch. vii. 26; 1 Pet. ii. 22; 1 Jo. iii. 5.
[s] Eph. ii. 18, iii. 12; ch. x. 19, 21, 22.

[40] *omit* will
[41] Joshua
[42] kept on speaking
[43] still remaineth
[44] a rest—a Sabbath-rest for
[45] rested
[46] even as
[47] give diligence (2 Pet. i. 10)
[48] *or*, so as to be in (and form part of)
[49] disobedience, *or* disbelief (*cf.* iii. 12)
[50] *i.e.*, living
[51] *or*, energetic, effectual
[52] of both
[53] ready judge
[54] laid bare to
[55] Having then
[56] through
[57] *Gr.* sympathize with
[58] one that hath been
[59] *Gr.* for timely help

CHAP. III. Having set forth the dignity of the person of Christ and the greatness of His condescension in taking our nature, the author exhorts the Hebrews to an earnest consideration (Gr.) of Jesus, the Apostle and Priest of the new economy, whom they, moreover, had accepted as their Apostle and Priest. The grounds of this exhortation are that Christ was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as was Moses, and that He is as superior to Moses as the son is to a servant, as the founder of an economy is to the economy itself, to which economy we really belong only if we are stedfast and true (ver. 6).

Ver. 1. **Holy brethren.** No mere complimentary title, but descriptive of the blessed brotherhood to which Christ and all who believe belong.—**Partakers of**, partners in a 'calling' that comes from heaven and leads to it, besides giving the tastes and spirit appropriate to our destiny (John iii. 31; Matt. iii. 2; Phil. iii. 20), servants, therefore, and workers under a new and divine economy.—**Christ Jesus.** The true reading is *Jesus* simply, with special reference to His human nature and His connection with ourselves (see vi. 20, vii. 22, xi. 4; Ex. iii. 10–15). He was *sent* from God, as was Moses, and He was Priest also, with Aaron's office and dignity—a thought expanded later (iv. 14, x. 22). This Apostle and Priest the Hebrews had acknowledged as their own (of our profession, or confession rather), and it became them to be faithful as confessors to Him they had in this double office accepted. It is probable that the expression, 'Apostle and Priest of our confession,' means even more than 'sent by God and accepted by us.' When the high priest went into the holy place on the day of Atonement, he was called the apostle, the messenger of the nation whom he represented, and for whom as priest he pleaded. So Christ has entered into the holy place as our accepted Messenger and Priest. To reject Him now is a double insult.

Ver. 2. **Who was faithful**; rather, consider Him, he being faithful—in that He is faithful. His faithfulness is the quality we are to contemplate, a fresh reason why we should trust Him and be faithful too. . . . The sphere of the service of Moses was a restricted economy—the house of Israel. Christ's is a wider economy, and includes all things. The maker must be greater than the work, and He that made all things must be Divine. Moses was part of the economy, the house *in* which he *served*. The economy, moreover, was a rough outline only—a shadowy

intimation of the higher economy of grace. Christ was faithful over His house as Son—that house His own (see on ver. 6), and the completed universal kingdom to which the old type gave witness. And all this is ours—the house, the kingdom—if we remain faithful and stedfast (1–6).

Ver. 3. **Builded.** The word implies gathering or making the materials, putting them together, and furnishing the whole, even appointing the servants—doing all that is necessary for completing 'the house' as a home. Even Moses, therefore, is regarded as part of the house which God prepared.

Ver. 5. **In all his house,** *i.e.* God's house.—**For a testimony,** *i.e.* his work was preparatory, testifying as He did to things that were afterwards to be revealed (chap. i. 2).—**As a servant.** The word for servant in this verse, which is often applied in O. T. to Moses, includes all the work that naturally falls to an *attendant* on another, even what is most confidential.

Ver. 6. **His own house**; rather, perhaps, His, *i.e.* God's house, the contrast being between a servant 'in the house' and a son '*over* it.' The Greek, however, may mean that while the house is God's, it is also emphatically 'the Son's,' whereas *over* His (*i.e.* God's) house means that it is Christ's only by implication, *i.e.* because He is over the house and is Son.—**Whose house** (*i.e.* God's, or by emphasis or by implication Christ's) **are we,** *i.e.* (as the absence of the article shows) of whose house—part, not all of it—are we provided, if so be that (a strong particle) we hold fast the confidence as shown in speech and acts (not 'boldness,' which is too much a description of outward manner or profession only); and the ground, the matter of exultation (blended joy and boasting) which hope supplies. As the blessings are even still largely future, *hope* even more than faith is the requisite grace.

Ver. 7. **Wherefore.** Since it is only the giving up of your hope that can rob you of this blessedness, . . . beware of unbelief (a connection that unites the 'wherefore' with verse 12); or lest you harden your hearts (a connection that unites the 'wherefore' with verse 8). The former explanation gives a good sense, and the length of the parenthesis is no objection (see Heb. vii. 20–22, xii. 18–24, where we have similar examples); but perhaps the second explanation is simpler, and commends itself to Delitzsch and others. It is also adopted in the Authorised Version.—**As the Holy Ghost saith.** The quotation is from the ninety-fifth Psalm, which in the Hebrew has no author's name, but in the Greek Version is ascribed to David, as it is in Heb. iv. 7.—**If ye will hear** quite misleads; if ye hear (literally, if you shall have heard).—**To-day** equals, with the whole phrase, whenever He speaks, whenever you hear His voice.

Ver. 8. **As in the day of provocation; like as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.** These clauses probably refer to two distinct occasions. The two words which are here translated 'provocation' and 'temptation' are in the Hebrew proper names, 'Meribah' (strife) and 'Massah' (temptation). On the first occasion (Ex. xvii. 1–7) the place is said to have been called Massah and Meribah, which the LXX. renders 'temptation' and 'provocation.' The second similar temptation occurred towards the close of the forty years, and is recorded in Num. xx. 1–13. Their wanderings began and ended in tempting and proving God; forty years long did their unbelief last. Not for single acts were they finally condemned, but for settled habits and a fixed character.

Ver. 9. **When**; rather 'where,' a common meaning of the Greek word.—**Tempted me, proved me.** The true reading is, 'tempted me in' (or by) 'proving' [me]. Strong passion is some excuse for sin. When men tempt God to try how far they may go, and how much He will bear, there is a shamelessness in their state of heart that is without excuse.—**And saw my works.** Either the punishment God inflicted, which failed to lead them to repentance (as the word is used in Ps. lxiv. 10; Isa. v. 12), or my mighty works, punishment in part, but chiefly mercy, and disregarding both they became the more guilty.

Ver. 10. **I was grieved** is somewhat feeble; displeased, offended, deeply pained, is nearer the thought. The word means properly what is a burden, physical or mental, 'grieved' being etymologically good (comp. 'it lay heavy on Him'). In some forms of the word it means what presses into the flesh and inflicts wounds.—**That generation** is the common Greek text, and it is the reading of the LXX.—**This generation** is the reading of the revised text. The Hebrew is simply 'with the generation.' The author has no doubt purposely inserted 'this' to show that he regards the passage as applying to the Jewish people generally, the living race of his time, as the word 'always' is added to the Hebrew in the following clause, being found, however, also in the LXX., and implied in the present tense of the verb in this place.—**Have not known,** or did not know. The Greek may describe a historical fact that preceded the erring in their hearts, or it may sum up their character, as in the Authorised Version: they have not known or understood the true nature and blessedness of the ways in which I would have had them to go (see Ex. xviii. 20).

Ver. 11. **So**; rather 'as,' though without much difference in meaning: the acts corresponded to the punishment is the meaning of 'as;' the punishment corresponded to the acts is the meaning of so. The former is the common meaning of the Greek.

Ver. 12. **Lest there be.** The peculiar expression of the original implies that the writer's fear lest there should be, is blended with the feeling that there will somehow be, an evil heart of unbelief. His interest in them, and what he knows of their tendencies, make his fear preponderate, and it is only kindness to them to tell them what he fears.—**An evil heart of unbelief** is not a heart made evil by unbelief, but a heart of which the essence is that it does not believe. The two qualities, evil and unbelief, are closely connected, and each produces the other.—**In departing**; literally, 'in apostatizing.'—**From the living God**; not the idols of the heathen, but the God of Israel, who is known emphatically by this name (Isa. xxxvii. 4), and who is now the God of the Christian Church, its Defender and Judge (see Heb. ix. 14, x. 31, xii. 22).

Ver. 13. **Exhort one another.** The verb is very frequent in the Acts and in Paul's Epistles, and occurs four times in this Epistle. Both here and in Heb. xiii. 16 (where it is said in the Autho-

rised Version that Christians are to exhort one another in psalms and hymns) mutual exhortation is implied; but the Greek is literally 'exhort yourselves,' and part of the idea is that the exhorter should have himself also as a hearer, even when he has no other. The word 'exhort,' moreover, includes all the kinds of help, consolation, encouragement, rebuke, which the Christian life needs.—**While**—as long as 'the **to-day**' is called—sounded—in your hearing, so long as the warning lasts, and the need for it, let there be circumspection and wariness.—**Look to it** (ver. 12) that no one from among *you* (as well as your fathers, ver. 9) fall into unbelief.

Another interpretation of 'while to-day is called' is, 'while the Psalm continues to be read;' so some eminent commentators (de Wette, Bengel, etc.); but this does not agree with the use which is made of the words in iv. 7, nor does it give an appropriate sense to 'is called.' The words may mean while the day of grace lasts, the time during which we hear the Gospel and are warned of the danger of apostasy. This meaning does not practically differ from the one already given, 'while to-day is sounded in your ears,' and is supported by a similar comment on the 'day of salvation' made by Paul (2 Cor. vi. 2).—**The deceitfulness of sin.** All sin has this quality (comp. Rom. vii. 9, 11), and especially the sin of unbelief, which is the sin of this context. Unlike the violation of purely moral precepts, it excites small disturbance in the conscience, and yet most effectively hardens the heart by making the most impressive truths powerless over the feelings.

Ver. 14. **We are made partakers**; rather, 'we are become,' *i.e.* we are now what we were not originally. The words describe a *present* character and an *acquired* character.—**If, that is, we hold fast the beginning of our confidence**—the confidence we have begun to exercise—**firm unto the end**; not our former confidence (1 Tim. v. 12), not the principle of our confidence, the essence of it, but the **beginning** of it . . . to the **end**. On this condition we are **partakers** of Christ, united with Him (John xv. 4, xvii. 23), 'even as He is united with us' (chap. ii. 14). This use of the word translated 'confidence' is found only in 2 Cor. ix. 4, xi. 17, and in this place. The Fathers generally regard it as meaning the beginning of what is *our* subsistence, *our* life, or even the beginning of what is the subsistence of Christ in us. The word is found, however, in Hellenistic writers and is now well known—in the sense of confidence.

Ver. 15. **While it is said.** The connection of this verse with the preceding is difficult. Out of many interpretations the most consistent is that adopted by Ebrard, Alford, and others. We must hold fast if we would be partakers of Christ, *as is implied in the warning* (in that it is said): **To-day if ye hear his voice**, etc.

Vers. 16–19. The argument of these verses has been variously interpreted, and the varieties are seen in the difference of the translation. The Authorised Version translates '**some . . . howbeit not all**;' the Revised translates '**who . . . ? nay, did not all.**' Most of the ancient commentators, and many of the modern, adopt the translation '**some**' in verse 16, even when they translate '**with whom**' as a question in verse 17; forms though they be of the same word, but with difference of accent. Bengel, Alford, and many more translate '**who**' and '**with whom**' as questions in both cases. They hold that it contributes to the force of the argument to affirm that all perished. But on the whole the Authorised seems the preferable rendering; for (1) the facts rather require the statement that not all perished. Besides Caleb and Joshua, all the children who were under twenty years of age when they left Egypt, and the women and the Levites, were exceptions. (2) The *N. Test.* comment favours it also, for in 1 Cor. x. 5 it is expressly said that it was 'with the **greater part** of them' (or, '**with very many** of them') 'God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness;' and again and again it is said in the same context that **some** of them were idolaters, and **some** of them tempted, and **some** of them murmured (vers. 7–10); while the appeal to these facts (the limited extent of the ruin, not the universality of it) is used in that passage for the same purpose of warning as here; and (3) the argument is better enforced by the translation of the Authorised than by the proposed change.—'Beware, for all perish,' may seem impressive; but it is more impressive still to say, as is said in 1 Cor. x., 'Most perished,' and perished through unbelief; those who were spared were only the minority, and they were spared because they were not guilty of the disobedience of the greater part of the nation. Blended fear and hope is the warning most likely to impress and encourage; nor was there danger of the Hebrews reading the lesson so as to foster delusion when it is so carefully intimated that men must perish wherever there is unbelief.—**Whose carcases**—literally limbs, suggesting, perhaps, the gradual decay of the nation's strength—one falling here, another there, till they were strewn all over the wilderness.

Ver. 18. **Believed not**, or disbelieved, is the sense rather than disobeyed. The word 'unbelief,' in verse 19, may be used alike of those who have or have not heard the truth; the word, in verse 18, of those only who have heard the Gospel and will not be persuaded to accept. The word in verse 18 means also to disobey as well as to disbelieve, and here the two ideas are combined; they did not obey the command that bade them to believe. Unbelief is as much disobedience as the breaking of any other Divine law. See John iii. 46, where both words are used and are translated 'believe;' 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8, where both are used, and are translated 'believe' and 'be disobedient' respectively; and Acts xiv. 2, xix. 9, where the word is the same as in verse 17, rendered 'disobedient,' and is yet translated in both places, in the Authorised Version, 'unbelief.' It is no doubt true, however, that the Israelites were disobedient and rebellious (see Deut. i. 26, etc.); but even when they are thus described, their acts of disobedience were generally owing to disbelief of Divine announcements. So it is in this Epistle. The Hebrews were not tempted to disobey what they regarded as a Divine command, but to doubt and disbelieve the divineness of the commands they had been obeying. Their danger was not so much inconsistency in not obeying what they believed, as the rejection of the Gospel itself.—**They shall not enter into my rest**; see on iv. 1.

Ver. 19. **So**; literally 'And' [we see], *i.e.* from these facts.

CHAP. IV. 1–11. To understand the force of the reasoning of these verses, and the naturalness

of the different interpretations of the Psalm which the Apostle is explaining, note that '**My rest**' is primarily the rest which God enjoys (Gen. ii. 2; Heb. iv. 4) or which God provides (Deut. xii. 9, 10). The first is the Sabbath rest which God enjoyed after His work of creation was completed, and which He provided for man when He instituted the day of rest, as He did long before the giving of the law; the second is the rest of Canaan, the rest which God gave Israel, a rest which proved very imperfect, partly because multitudes never entered it, partly because the rest itself was never fully realized even for those who did enter it. Both meanings of the word, therefore, point to such rest as the Gospel gives, of which the rest of the Sabbath and the rest of Canaan were types, and imperfect types. Two other facts need to be kept in mind: the word Sabbath and Sabbath-rest (see ver. 9) are Hebrew words for what is translated '**rest**' and (as a verb in Genesis) 'rested;' and the word 'entered in,' moreover, is a common word in the Old Testament—almost a cant word, like 'going home to Canaan,' 'over the Jordan,' 'one more river to cross'—for 'inheriting the earth,' taking possession of the land of promise. Hence the naturalness of the interpretation which the Apostle refutes. The rest of which the Psalm speaks, and which the unbelieving miss, is not, as the word may mean, the Sabbath-rest which God instituted at the first, nor is it the rest of Canaan into which the Jews entered under the guidance of Joshua. The rest from which the disobedient Israelites were debarred was neither the one nor the other, for at that time the Israelites had both. It was a rest that stood over in David's time for future realization—a rest into which those enter, and those only, who believe (see ver. 3)—the rest of the Gospel, completed in the rest above. How natural this argument is may be gathered from the religious poetry of all Christian sects, and from the language employed even now to describe the Divine life. Every incident of the journey of the Israelites from Egypt into Canaan is spiritualized in our common religious teaching, and so may easily have been regarded as the reality, not as the type. How necessary the argument is also clear. The announcement that the Jews are not as Jews part of the true theocratic kingdom, that Canaan was not heaven, was to them one of the hardest sayings of the Gospel.

Ver. 1. **Let us therefore fear.** A stronger expression than the caution of iii. 12 ('take heed'), and the fitting preparation for the 'earnest labour' of chap. iv. 12. We are not to doubt the truth of the Divine promise, and the more firmly we believe it the more active shall we be in the fulfilment of every duty; but we are to fear the treachery of our own hearts. Continued unbelief will exclude us from God's rest, from the peace and blessedness which the Gospel gives both here and hereafter; and even if we finally repent and reach heaven, unbelief will, in proportion as we indulge it, lessen the enjoyment into which we enter by believing, and which we can enter in no other way. This godly fear, instead of debasing the mind, inspires courage and freedom; it preserves us from vain security, checks self-confidence, and makes us vigilant against everything that may endanger our safety.—**Lest, somehow, haply.** This last phrase, which it is not easy to express, calls attention to the greatness of the danger and emphasizes the caution.—**A promise being left us.** A promise remaining over unfulfilled.—**Any one of you should seem . . .** It should turn out that any one of you has come short of it; literally, lest any one of you should seem (to himself or to others), when the decisive day comes, to have failed, and to have no part in the promise—a warning of a fearful result, given with a delicacy quite usual with the writer; or it may be a statement like that in Matt. xxv. 40–46, where we are told that many will not know their true character till they hear it described at the bar of God. Their ruin will be as startling to themselves as to others.

Ver. 2. **For unto us has the Gospel been preached as well as unto them,** *i.e.* we both have our Gospel or glad tidings of a future rest, equally a Divine message, though given with different degrees of fulness.—**But the word preached**; rather, the word **heard** (literally, of hearing), was of no use to them, brought no profit, because they were not united (literally 'mingled') by (and in) faith with them that heard it, *i.e.* who listened and obeyed—Caleb, Joshua, and the rest. The word 'not united,' 'unmingled,' is found only here and in 1 Cor. xii. 24, and describes a state that follows from affinity and sympathy.

Ver. 3. **For we who have believed are entering into rest.** We only are entering who believe; it is not, therefore, the rest of the Sabbath which the Jews long since possessed (vers. 4–6), nor is it, as the author goes on to say, the rest of Canaan. To strengthen the statement that it is only believers who enter into God's rest, he quotes again the ninety-fifth Psalm: **As he** (*i.e.* God) **said, As I have sworn in my wrath, they** (who did not believe) **shall not enter into my rest.**—'**If they shall not enter**' is the same phrase as is translated '**they shall not enter,**' in chap. iii. 11; the phrase is part of the Hebrew oath ('God do so to me and more also, *if*,' *i.e.* I swear I will or I will *not*), and is here a strong negation; so in verse 5: '**they shall not enter into my rest.**' It was unbelief that excluded them, and so it is faith that brings us in, the appropriate means of producing peace and blessedness, and itself obedience to God's command.

Ver. 5. **In this place again,** *i.e.* either **to quote again** what was said before, or the Sabbath rest which God provides, is, *on the other hand*, shown not to be the rest spoken of in the Psalm, inasmuch as the men described have *not* entered it.

Ver. 6 is clearly an unfinished sentence, finding its completion in verses 9 or 11.—**Let us therefore labour,** etc., **seeing it remaineth**; rather, it still remaineth, for some to enter in to God's rest, and those who formerly heard the glad tidings of a rest entered not in because of unbelief. In all these verses where 'it remains' is used, the phrase has the same meaning—not that a rest now remains and is still future, but that the promise was not fulfilled in the Sabbath-rest or in the Canaan-rest; and therefore when this Epistle was written, it was still a warning and an invitation. It awaited the faith and the entrance which were to exhaust its meaning.

Ver. 7. **Again.** To continue the argument and to correct another misconstruction. He has already shown that the rest of God of which he here speaks is not the rest of God after creation; he now proceeds to show, by a further examina-

tion of the Psalm, that neither is it the rest of Canaan.—**He limiteth** (still further defines the day and consequently the rest of which he speaks) **a certain day, saying in David** (as we say 'in Daniel'), not '*by*' David, nor, as Bengel holds, '*in*,' *i.e.* by the Spirit dwelling in and inspiring him.—**A long time** (some 500 years) **after** they had entered Canaan, *as it is said in the forequoted passage* (iii. 7, 15).—**To-day if ye hear his voice, harden not your hearts.** Some think the words 'To-day' look forward to the time of the Gospel (translating 'to-day,' *i.e.* as it said a long time before the day comes; so Dr. J. Brown and others; but if this be the meaning, it would surely be needless for the writer to prove by argument that the entering into rest had not yet come). —**A long time** points back to the entrance into Canaan, and 'as it has been said before' (the true reading) points simply to the previous quotations.

Ver. 8. Clearly, therefore, the Psalm speaks of a Divine rest into which men are bidden to enter, different from the rest of Canaan, and long subsequent to it.—**For if Joshua** (here and in Acts vii. 45, **Jesus**, the Greek form of Joshua, quite misleads) **had given them rest**—had led them into the rest of which we are speaking—He (*i.e.* God, who further defines 'the day' in David, and describes the rest as still unentered) would not have gone on speaking after that of another day (or of another day after that, *i.e.* still future).

Ver. 9. **Therefore there remains** (still unrealized in any rest that Israel then enjoyed) **a sacred rest, a Sabbath-rest** (the word is now changed), **for the people of God.** The name here given, '**the people of God,**' is the usual designation of the covenant people. It occurs again in Heb. xi. 25, and is used in its deepest sense of all who are 'children of God through faith' (Gal. vi. 16). The use of the word Sabbath in this sense for the rest which God provides under the Gospel was quite familiar to the Jews. The coming kingdom of the Messiah was even called 'the perpetual Sabbath.' Into that rest all enter who believe Some regard this verse as completing the sentence that began in verse 6. The better completion is found in verse 11.

Ver. 10. **For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his works, just as God rested from his**; *i.e.*, say some (Owen, Wardlaw, Ebrard), as Christ is entered into His rest, so also are we to be conformed to Him and to share His rest. But Christ is not named in the previous context, and is nowhere designated as 'He who entered or is entered into His rest,' nor would the argument have force with those who were questioning His mission. The other view, adopted by Bleek and Delitzsch, is that the words describe the people of God, those who by believing enter that state of peace and blessedness which is begun on earth and perfected in heaven. They have fellowship with God; they rest even as God rests, and have a happiness that is of the same nature, and springs from the same source, as His. The phrase, 'ceases from his own works as God did from His,' might then refer to the rest which men sought to no purpose under the Law or in Canaan. The true peace, the sacred rest of the Gospel, frees us from the necessity of seeking a righteousness of our own, and speaks peace to the conscience as the Law never did, making the whole life peaceful and joyous. This 'is the rest, and this is the refreshing,' and it is shared by all who believe.

This explanation of the argument of this part of the Epistle throws light on the meaning of the rest, the Sabbath-rest, of which the writer speaks. Some (Owen, Wardlaw, etc.) hold that the three rests here spoken of are the Sabbath-rest of Paradise, the Jewish rest of Canaan, and the Christian Sabbath rest that commemorates the completion of the new creation and the deliverance of the people of God from a worse bondage than that of Egypt. Important as these rests are, it surely falls far below the dignity of the theme to suppose that the writer refers to any positive institution merely, however useful or blessed. Others think that the 'rest which remains' must be heaven: we who believe enter it, all who enter it rest from their toils and work as God rested; and the conclusion seems sustained by the fact that the rest is ever spoken of as 'still remaining.' But this interpretation mistakes the meaning of 'remaining,' which is simply that it was not realized either in the Sabbath rest or in Canaan; while it is realized, is being realized, under the Gospel, as men believe. It includes, no doubt, the rest of heaven, which is the completion of our blessedness on earth; but the primary idea still is the rest which Christ gives to all who take His yoke upon them. and to whom, on their believing, old things are passed away,—sins, character, burdens, unrest,—and all things have become new. The words of C. Wesley are not even an adaptation of the sentiment—they are an exposition of it:

'Lord, I believe a rest remains
To all Thy people known—
A rest where pure enjoyment reigns,
And Thou art loved alone.

'Oh! that I now the rest might know,
Believe and enter in;
Now, Saviour, now the power bestow,
And let me cease from sin.

'Remove the hardness from my heart,
This unbelief remove;
To me the rest of faith impart,
The Sabbath of Thy love.'

Ver. 11. **Let us therefore** begins the practical exhortation based on verse 6, of which it is the completion.—**Labour**, give diligence (as in 2 Pet. i. 10), seek earnestly, strive to enter into that rest, lest any man fall and form part of the same example of disobedience or unbelief; lest through unbelief like theirs we like them come short of the promise. The earnest striving, the eager seeking of which the writer speaks, is well described by St. Paul in Phil. iii. 7–14, and in 2 Pet. i. 5–12. In one sense faith is ceasing to work and beginning to trust; in another sense it is the most difficult of all works, requiring the energy of the whole nature, and the help of the blessed God besides. It is at once a gift and a duty, the easiest and the hardest 'way of life.'—**Lest they fall into** and so become another example of unbelief—a pregnant construction. Whether fall has its lighter meaning, as Luther and Delitzsch hold, or is used absolutely,—fall away and perish (as Calvin, Bengel, and Bleek hold),—we need not discuss here. The word is probably suggested by the doom of the Israelites who fell in the wilderness and perished (iii. 17); and it is used in the same deep sense in Rom. xi. 11. The fact that the Hebrews are cautioned lest they should fall through a disbelief that proved ruinous to those who yielded to it before, shows that the word has

probably its deeper meaning; it is the opposite state of entering into rest. Of course it is true also that *in proportion* as they fall, whether in degree or duration, they miss peace and swell the number of those who are warnings to all who witness them. But here the warning seems permanent, and the fall, therefore, complete.

Vers. 12 and 13 give a fresh reason for this warning.—**For the word of God is quick** (*i.e.* living) **and powerful.** But what is 'the word of God'? The common Patristic interpretation refers it to the Word incarnate, the personal 'Word' of the writings of St. John: so also Owen and many others. But that use of the term is peculiar in the New Testament to St. John, unless this be an instance. And the interpretation seems hardly appropriate to the description that is here given of it; nor is Christ ever so named in the Epistle itself, where 'the Son of God' is His common title. Had the author been familiar with 'the Word' in that personal sense, he would certainly have used it (as he did not) in Heb. xi. 3. The ordinary meaning, therefore, is to be preferred—the word of which he has been speaking—the word especially which excludes the unbeliever from the promised rest, and denounces against him the Divine indignation. The description is true of all Scripture, but emphatically true of the passages which condemn disobedience. This word is a *living* word—not, as we sometimes say of a law, 'a dead letter,' having its place in our statute book, but never executed—having living power, and so something of the attributes of Him who is 'the living God;' and *powerful*, energic, operative, not inefficient, as if God never meant to execute it, or as if He had no means of carrying it into execution. The sentence that the unbeliever shall not enter into God's rest is the utterance of *a living force*, not a dead law, which is mighty enough to execute the Divine purpose in relation to transgression, and is sure to execute it. Nor only so: **and sharper far** (a double comparative) **than any two-edged sword** (literally two-mouthed), *i.e.* a sword sharpened on both edge and back, cutting both ways, and peculiarly trenchant (Isa. xlix. 2; Rev. i. 16, etc.; see also Eph. vi. 17).—**Piercing through, even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow.** This quality of the Word has been regarded by some as a mere description of the power of the Word of God to produce conviction, to show the sinner the falsehood and the wickedness of even his inmost thoughts; but this explanation anticipates what follows, and is hardly consistent with the context. It is better to regard the words as a completion of the previous thought. The soul was regarded by the Greeks as the principle of animal life and action; the spirit, as the principle of rational life and action. To separate them is to destroy the life of the man, the description being taken from the inner nature. Similarly the joints or limbs, of which the bones are the framework, and marrow are also closely connected; to separate them is to produce great pain and death itself, the description being taken from the physical life. The threatening of God against disbelief is a threatening that will certainly be executed, and when executed intensest suffering, destruction, and misery will ensue. Suffering with the possibility of destruction—not necessarily destruction—may be the idea, as in similar passages (Luke ii. 35; Jer. iv. 10, LXX.); but this interpretation does no justice to the strong word—**the dividing asunder** of soul and spirit. On either interpretation the lesson is solemn and instructive. What occurred in the case of the Israelites who fell by hundreds of thousands in the wilderness will occur under the Gospel with aggravated suffering if men will not believe. . . . Nor does this word take cognizance of outward acts only,—open apostasy,—it is **a discerner** and judge **of the thoughts and intents** (or rather of the inclinations and thoughts) **of the heart.** Feelings and thoughts, desires and ideas (opinions as we call them), are equally under its jurisdiction; backslidings of heart, as well as of life, it marks and condemns. The religion of Christ is eminently spiritual. Not the outer life only; the inmost nature, mental and emotional, must be subject to the Divine authority, and conformed to the Divine will.

Ver. 13. The power of this word comes really from Him *whose it is.* More accurately, the Word of God is God Himself speaking. The writer, therefore, naturally turns from the instrument to the author.—**Neither is there any creature**—any created thing visible or invisible (Col. i. 16; even, perhaps, thought, the creature of the mind: Michaelis)—**that is not manifest in his,** *i.e.* **God's, sight** (a Hebraism common in St. Luke, in St. Paul, and in Alexandrian writers).—**But all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.** These phrases, though their general meaning is clear, have been variously explained. 'Laid bare' may refer to the victims which were hung up by the neck, opened, and the backbone cleft from the neck downwards, so that the priest might see any blemish which made the victim unfit for sacrifice (so the ancient Greek Fathers explained it); but there are no known instances of this meaning of the word: others say the reference is to the athlete caught by the neck and thrown prostrate on his back for all to see his defeat. The first of these interpretations is on the whole the more probable, the words being addressed to Jews who were more familiar with sacrifices than with the games. Anyhow, the general meaning is clear, that before God we are all manifest, stripped of every covering and concealment, our very thoughts, our 'secret faults,' revealed **to the eyes of him with whom we have to do,** *i.e.* with whom our business is (a sense that may be seen in Judg. viii. 7, 28). The Greek Fathers give the words a narrower meaning—**to whom our account is to be given**; but the English Version is at once idiomatic and accurate. All this description applies, of course, to our relation to Christ, and many commentators regard the words as applied to Him in this passage; but unless we accept the explanation that the Word of God is the personal Logos—Christ Himself (not a natural interpretation)—it is more grammatical and more accurate to regard the verse as applicable primarily to God who is Judge of all, though at the last He gives all judgment to the Son.

Ver. 14. The following verses (14–16) might begin a new paragraph, and are closely connected with the fifth chapter; but on the other hand, verse 14 looks back to the brief statement in chap. i. 3, ii. 17, and iii. 1, and its hortatory form naturally makes it rather a completion of what precedes. It is, moreover, the author's manner to blend with admonitions, based on

previous teaching, assertions of what he is about to prove.

It is a peculiarity of the Gospel that it seems now without a sacrifice and without a priest. The unbelieving Jews would naturally say, 'Your new religion is without the first requisite of a Divine system; you have no sacrifice and no high priest—how can sin be forgiven? who can intercede for you?' The objection is answered in this passage: We have a High Priest, a great High Priest, transcending in personal and official dignity all that ever bore the name, for He is Jesus, the Son of God, each title implying His superiority. No doubt His sacrifice has ceased, and He Himself has passed through the heavens beyond clouds and stars, even into the heaven of heavens, to the very throne of God itself; just as the Jewish high priest on the day of Atonement offered sacrifices of expiation, entered into the holy place, and then through the second veil into the holiest of all, to sprinkle the blood of atonement and to burn incense, an odour of a sweet smell, a symbol of acceptance to Him who dwells between the cherubim. The objection that we have no sacrifice or priest is met by the fact that our High Priest has completed His work on earth, and has gone, not into an earthly tabernacle, the image of the true, but into heaven to the throne of God itself—an evidence of the efficacy of His mediation and the means of perpetuating it. His entrance and His intercession there are really 'a perpetual oblation' with the intimation of His 'will' that the blessings He has gained be bestowed on them for whom He pleads. The exhortation is, therefore, that we **hold fast our confession**—what we have acknowledged as true and Christian faith, the word being used in a wider sense than in iii. 1.

Ver. 15. **For.** Whatever the difficulties of our Christian life, whatever the dangers that tempt us to turn aside, whatever the dignity of our Priest, whatever the awful power of the Word of God, we have not a High Priest unable to sympathize with us in our infirmities, but on the contrary one tempted in all things like as we are (or rather in accordance with the likeness there is between us), sin apart. The infirmities of which the writer speaks are not strictly sufferings or afflictions, but the weaknesses—physical, spiritual, moral—whereby sin is likely to find entrance, and misery is produced—hunger, poverty, reproach, the dread of sufferings, the love of rest, of friends, the difficulty of living by faith, the tendency to judge things by present results, to snatch victory in the easiest way; whatever, in short, is natural to man, and yet not itself sinful. The temptations of Christ in the wilderness, which are described as representing most of the forms in which temptation assails us; all He endured when the 'season' came in which the tempter renewed his work, and especially in the hour and power of darkness, illustrate the meaning. All He bore and all He remembers, and so in a sense bears still (note the present perfect tense), fits Him to sympathize with like weaknesses in us. In all these temptations of His there was no sin in the origin of them in the struggle, in the results; but that fact only increases His fitness for His office and our confidence. He bore all, and yet was undefiled; and so His pity, while most tender, is in no danger of becoming weakness, which would itself create distrust even if it did not end in sin. 'Sin apart,' therefore, is added, as much in our interest as to the honour of our Lord. The perfect sympathy of a sinful man would have given very imperfect consolation.

Ver. 16. **Let us therefore come nigh**—a common word in this Epistle for drawing nigh to God by sacrifice, or under the Gospel through Christ (vii. 25, x. 1, xi. 6). St. Paul's word for a similar idea is generally different (see Rom. v. 2; Eph. ii. 18, iii. 12, we have boldness and *access* by faith) with the added idea when addressing Gentiles that they are brought nigh.—**With boldness**, rather with confidence (see chap. iii. 6), not as the Israelites trembled when they approached, not to the mercy-seat, but at most towards it—the priest alone entering the holiest of all, but with the trust that tells all its wants—**to the throne of grace** (not Christ as if He were the mercy-seat, as some have held, nor the throne of Christ, but), the throne of God Himself; not of His justice, however, nor of His providence, but of His grace made such in fact by the propitiation which Christ has offered, and in part by our assurance that the priest himself feels for us.—**That we may obtain mercy**—pity—partly, as His sympathy implies, but chiefly the means of forgiveness for the sins which still cleave to us as children (see 2 Tim. i. 18, Jude 21, where the idea is that the mercy we receive from day to day is confirmed and perfected in the day of God): we need continual forgiveness for continual sin (1 John i. 10, ii. 1).—**And grace.** Whatever we need to perfect our holiness and happiness—those gifts of free favour which prove God to be our friend, and will help us to persevere in the faith and obedience of the truth till we are partakers of the perfected grace which is glory—the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. i. 13).—**For seasonable help** is the literal rendering of the last clause, *i.e.* help convenient, suitable to the occasion; 'in time of need' is very good if that mean, as it may, 'as we need it,' and so is appropriate to each emergency as it arises.

These exhortations were eminently suited to the condition of the Hebrew Christians. With such a High Priest, who has expiated our sins, has passed into the presence of God, thus proving the acceptance and the continuance of His work, whose Divine Sonship gives virtue to His sacrifice, whose perfect sympathy with us in all our weaknesses is made complete through His endurance of the same trials, let us persevere in the confession we have made—seek from God with the boldness of children the mercy and the grace we need for emergencies and opportunities alike till our victory is complete. Nor less suited is the exhortation to ourselves. In every age the same temptations assail us, though they assume different forms; and in every age the maintenance of the truth as it is in Jesus, and habitual (mark the present tense, 'continue coming') intercourse with God as the God of Peace and blessing under the influence of this truth, these are the true sources of our stedfastness.

CHAPTER V. 1–VII. 28.

The excellency of the Christian Dispensation proved by Christ's superiority to Aaron, v.–vii. 28.—*His Appointment and Compassion*, v. 7–10.—*Digression on the Priesthood of Melchisedec, and the reasons for it*, v. 11–14.—*Progress in Knowledge essential*, vi. 1–3.—*Danger of Apostasy, and arguments against it*, 4–20.—*Argument resumed—Christ's Priesthood proved superior by various arguments*, vii. 1–28.

1 FOR every high priest taken [1] from among men [a] is ordained [2]
for men [b] in things *pertaining* to God, [c] that he may offer
2 both gifts and sacrifices for sins: [d] who can have compassion
on [3] the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; [4] for
3 that [e] he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And [f] by
reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to
4 offer for sins. [g] And no man taketh this honour unto himself,
5 but he that is [5] called of God, as [h] *was* Aaron. [i] So also Christ
glorified not himself to be made [6] an high priest: but he that
said unto him,

[k] Thou art my Son,
To-day have I begotten thee.

6 As he saith also in another *place*,

[l] Thou *art* a priest for ever
After the order of Melchisedec.

7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had [m] offered up prayers
and supplications [n] with strong crying and tears unto him [o] that
was able to save him from death, and was heard [p] in that he
8 feared; [7] [q] though he were [8] a Son, yet learned he [r] obedience
9 by the things which he suffered; and [s] being made perfect, he
became the author [9] of [t] eternal salvation unto all them that
10 obey him; called of God an [10] high priest [u] after the order of
11 Melchisedec. Of whom [11] [v] we have many things to say, and
12 hard to be uttered, [12] seeing ye are [13] [w] dull of hearing. For
when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that
one teach you again which *be* [x] the first principles [14] of the
oracles of God; and are become such as have need of [y] milk,
13 and not of strong meat. [15] For every one that useth [16] milk *is*
unskilful [17] in the word of righteousness: for he is [z] a babe.
14 But strong meat [15] belongeth to them that are of full age, [18] *even*

[a] Ch. viii. 3.
[b] Ch. ii. 17.
[c] Ch. viii. 3, 4, ix. 9, x. 11, xi. 4.
[d] Ch. ii. 18, iv. 15.
[e] Ch. vii. 28.
[f] Lev. iv. 3, ix. 7, xvi. 6, 15, 16, 17; ch. vii. 27, ix. 7.
[g] 2 Chron. xxvi. 18; Jo. iii. 27.
[h] Ex. xxviii. 1; Num. xvi 5, 40; 1 Chron. xxiii. 13.
[i] Jo. viii. 54.
[k] Ps. ii. 7; ch. i. 5.
[l] Ps. cx. (cix.) 4; ch. vii. 17, 21
[m] Mat. xxvi. 39, 42, 44; Mk. xiv. 36, 39; Jo. xvii. 1.
[n] Ps. xxii. 1; Mat. xxvii. 46, 50; Mk. xv. 34, 37.
[o] Mat. xxvi. 53 Mk. xiv. 36.
[p] Mat. xxvi. 37, Mk. xiv. 33; Lu. xxii. 43 Jo. xii. 27.
[q] Ch. iii. 6.
[r] Phil. ii. 8.
[s] Ch. ii. 10, xi. 40.
[t] Isa. xlv. 17.
[u] Ps. cx. (cix.) 4; ch. vi. 20.
[v] Jo. xvi. 12; 2 Pet. iii. 16.
[w] Mat. xiii. 15.
[x] Ch. vi. 1.
[y] 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2, 3.
[z] 1 Cor. xiii. 11, xiv. 20; Eph iv. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 2.

[1] being taken (*i.e.* being taken as he is)
[2] appointed
[3] deal gently with (*or*, feel gently towards)
[4] and the erring (wandering)
[5] *read*, when
[6] to become
[7] for his godly fear
[8] was
[9] *Gr.* the cause
[10] addressed by God as (*see* v. 6)
[11] *or*, Of which (subject)
[12] explained
[13] *insert* become
[14] the rudiments of the first principles (*Gr.* of the beginning), *see* vi. 1
[15] solid food
[16] *Gr.* partaketh ('takes')
[17] inexperienced
[18] mature—full grown (*Gr.* finished, *or* perfect); *see* vi. 1, *perfection*

those who by reason of use have their senses exercised [a] to discern both good and evil.

CHAP. VI. 1. Therefore [b] leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection;[19] not laying again the foundation of [c] repentance [d] from dead works, and of [e] faith 2 toward God, [f] of the doctrine of baptisms, [g] and of laying on of hands, [h] and of resurrection of the dead, [i] and of eternal 3, 4 judgment. And this will we do, [k] if God permit. For [l] *it is* impossible for those [m] who were once[20] enlightened, and have[21] tasted of [n] the heavenly gift, and [o] were made[22] partakers of 5 the Holy Ghost, and have[21] tasted the good word of God, and 6 the powers of [p] the world[23] to come, if they shall fall away,[24] to renew them again unto repentance; [q] seeing they crucify[25] to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open 7 shame. For the earth which drinketh[26] in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth [r] herbs[27] meet for them by 8 whom it is dressed,[28] [s] receiveth blessing from God: [t] but that which[29] beareth thorns and briers *is*[30] rejected, and *is* nigh 9 unto cursing;[31] [u] whose end *is* to be [v] burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accom- 10 pany salvation, though we thus speak: [w] for [x] God *is* not unrighteous to forget [y] your work and labour of love,[32] which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have[33] [z] ministered 11 to the saints, and do minister. And[34] we desire that [a] every one of you do show the same diligence [b] to the full assurance 12 of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but [c] followers[35] of them who through faith and patience [d] inherit the promises. 13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could 14 swear by no greater, [e] he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15 And so, after he had patiently endured,[36] he obtained the 16 promise. For men verily[37] swear by the greater: and [f] an oath 17 for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife.[38] Wherein[39] God, willing more abundantly to show unto [g] the heirs of promise[40] [h] the immutability of his counsel,[41] confirmed *it* by[42] an 18 oath: that by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible

[a] Isa. vii. 15, 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.
[b] Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14; ch. v. 12.
[c] Mk. i. 15; Jo. iii. 3; Acts ii. 38.
[d] Ch. ix. 14.
[e] Jo. iii. 16; Acts iii. 26; 2 Cor. v. 19-21.
[f] Acts ii. 38, xix. 4, 5.
[g] Acts viii. 14-17, xix. 6.
[h] Jo. v. 28, 29; Acts xvii. 31, 32, xxiv. 15.
[i] Jo. v. 22-27; Acts xvii. 31, xxiv. 25; Rom. ii. 16; 2 Cor. v. 10.
[k] Acts xviii. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 19.
[l] Mat. xii. 31, 32; ch. x. 26; 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21; 1 Jo. v. 16.
[m] Ch. x. 26, 32; 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.
[n] Jo. iv. 10, vi. 32; Eph. ii. 8.
[o] Gal. iii. 2, 5; ch. ii. 4.
[p] Ch. ii. 5.
[q] Ch. x. 29.
[r] Gen. i. 11.
[s] Ps. lxv 10.
[t] Gen. iii. 17, 18; Isa. v. 6.
[u] Deut. xxix. 22, 23; 2 Cor. xi. 15; Heb. x. 26, 27
[v] Prov. xiv. 32; Mat. x. 42, xxv. 40; Jo xiii. 20.
[w] Rom. iii. 4; 2 Thes. i. 6, 7.
[x] 1 Thes. i. 3; cp. x. 32–34.
[y] Rom. xv. 25; 2 Cor. viii. 4, ix. 1, 12; 2 Tim. i. 18.
[z] Ch. iii. 6, 14.
[a] Col. ii. 2.
[b] 1 Cor. xvi. 11; Eph. v. 1; 1 Thes. i. 6, ii. 14.
[c] Ch. x. 36.
[d] Gen. xxii. 16; Ps. cv. 9; Lu. i. 73.
[e] Ex. xxii. 11
[f] Ch. xi. 9.
[g] Rom. xi. 29.

[19] Wherefore *and for the rest, or*, leaving the word (the instruction) of the first principles (*see note* 14) of Christ, let us press on unto maturity
[20] once for all [21] *omit* have [22] became [23] *or*, age
[24] *Gr.* and fell away [25] *Gr.* crucifying as they do . . . and putting
[26] land which hath drunk [27] herbage
[28] for whom (on whose account) it is tilled [29] when it
[30] it is [31] a curse [32] *read*, the love [33] *omit* have
[34] But [35] *Gr.* imitators [36] *rather*, waited [37] *omit* verily
[38] *rather*, and in every contradiction (*or*, dispute) of theirs, the oath is final for confirmation or settlement of the matter (*see note on* v. 16)
[39] Wherefore [40] the promise
[41] *Counsel is a form of the same word as willing*—'willing to show . . . of his will'—*or*, 'minded to show . . . of his mind' [42] *rather*, interposed with

for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation,[43] who have
fled for refuge to lay hold upon the [h]hope [i]set before us:
19 which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and
stedfast, [k]and which entereth[44] into that within the veil;
20 [l]whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, [m]made[45]
an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
CHAP. VII. 1. For this [n]Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of [o]the
most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter
2 of the kings, and [p]blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave[46]
a tenth part of all; (first being by interpretation King of
righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is,
3 King of peace; without father, without mother, without
descent,[47] having neither beginning of days, nor end of life;
but made like unto the Son of God:) [q]abideth a priest con-
4 tinually. Now consider how great this man *was*, [r]unto whom
even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.[48]
5 And verily [s]they that are of the sons of Levi, who[49] receive
the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes
of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren,
6 though they[50] come out of the loins of Abraham: but he
whose descent[47] is not counted from them received[51] tithes of
7 Abraham, [t]and blessed[52] [u]him that had[53] the promises. And
without all contradiction[54] the less is blessed of the better.
8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he *receiveth*
9 *them*, [v]of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so
say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.[55]
10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec
11 met him. [w]If therefore perfection were[56] by the Levitical
priesthood, (for under[57] it the people received[58] the law,) what
further need *was there* that another[59] priest should rise [x]after
the order of Melchisedec, and not be called[60] after the order of
12 Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made[61] of
13 necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these
things are spoken[62] pertaineth to[63] another[59] tribe, of which
14 no man gave[64] attendance at the altar. For *it is* evident that
[y]our Lord sprang[65] out of Juda; of[66] which tribe Moses spake

h Col. i. 5; Tit. ii. 13.
i Ch. xii. 1.
k Lev. xvi. 2, 12, 15; ch. ix. 7.
l Ch. iv. 14, viii. 1, ix. 24.
m Ps. cx. (cix.) 4; ch. iii. 1, v. 6, 10, vii. 17.
n Gen. xiv. 17, xix. 22, etc.
o Ver. 22.
p Deut. xxi. 5.
q Gen. xiv. 18.
r Gen. xiv. 17, etc
s Num. xviii. 21, 26.
t Gen. xiv. 18.
u Rom. iv. 13; Gal. iii. 16.
v Ch. v. 6, vi. 20
w Vers. 18, 19; Gal. ii. 21; ch. viii. 7.
x Ps. cx. (cix.) 4.
y Isa. xi. 1–5; Mic. v. 2; Mat. i. 3; Lu. iii. 33; Rom. i. 3; Rev. v. 5.

[43] *or*, encouragement
[44] entering
[45] Where as forerunner for us Jesus is entered, having become
[46] *literally*, gave as his portion (*or*, divided)
[47] genealogy
[48] out of the chief spoils
[49] *rather*, when they (on their receiving)
[50] *rather*, these (*i.e.* their brethren)
[51] hath taken
[52] hath blessed
[53] hath
[54] *rather*, without any contradiction or gainsaying (*or*, beyond all contradiction)
[55] so to say, through Abraham, even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath been tithed himself
[56] If then there was perfection
[57] *Gr.* on the ground of
[58] *read*, hath received
[59] a different
[60] that he should be said to be not
[61] comes to be
[62] said (*as in* v. 11)
[63] *Gr.* hath partaken of
[64] hath ever given
[65] hath sprung
[66] as to

15 nothing concerning priesthood.[67] And it is yet far more
evident: for that[68] after the similitude of Melchisedec there
16 ariseth another[69] priest, who is[70] made, not after the law of a
carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless[71] life.
17 For he testifieth,[72] [g] Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order
18 of Melchisedec. For there is verily[73] a disannulling of the
commandment going before for[74] [a] the weakness and unprofit-
19 ableness thereof. For [b] the law made nothing perfect, but
the bringing in of [c] a better hope *did*;[75] by[76] the which [d] we
20 draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath
21 *he was made priest:* (for those priests were made[77] without an
oath; but this[78] with an oath by him that said unto him,

[e] The Lord sware and will not repent,
Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

22 By so much [f] was Jesus made[79] a surety of a better testa-
23 ment.[80] And they truly were many priests,[81] because they
24 were not suffered to continue[82] by reason of death: but this
man,[83] because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priest-
25 hood.[83] Wherefore he is able also to save them to the utter-
most[84] that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth [g] to
26 make intercession for them. For such an high priest became
us, [h] *who is* [i] holy, harmless, undefiled, separate[85] from sinners,
27 [k] and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily,
as those high priests, [l] first for his own
sins, [m] and then for the people's: for [n] this he did once,[86] when
28 he offered up himself. For the law maketh[87] [o] men high priests
which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was
since[88] the law, *maketh*[87] the Son, [p] who is consecrated[89] for
evermore.

[g] Ps. cx. 4; ch. v. 6, 10, vi. 20.
[a] Rom. viii. 3; Gal. iv. 9.
[b] Acts xiii. 39; Rom. iii. 20, 21, 28. viii. 3; Gal. ii. 16; ch. ix. 9.
[c] Ch. vi. 18, viii. 6.
[d] Rom. v. 2; Eph. ii. 18, iii. 12; ch. iv 16, x. 19.
[e] Ps. cx. 4.
[f] Ch. viii. 6, ix. 15, xii. 24.
[g] Rom. viii. 34; 1 Tim. ii. 5; ch. ix. 24; 1 Jo. ii. 1.
[h] Ch. iv. 15.
[i] Ps. xv. (xvi.) 10.
[k] Eph. i. 20, iv. 10; ch. iv. 14, viii. 1.
[l] Lev. ix. 7, xvi. 6, 11; ch. v. 3, ix. 7.
[m] Lev. xvi. 15.
[n] Rom. vi. 10; ch. ix. 12, 28, x. 12.
[o] Ch. v. 1, 2.
[p] Ps. ii. 7; ch. ii. 10, v. 9.

[67] *read*, priests [68] if [69] a different
[70] hath been (*Gr.* hath come to be) [71] *Gr.* indissoluble
[72] *read*, It is witnessed of him [73] *omit* verily [74] because of
[75] because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof; (for the law made nothing perfect;) and there is a bringing in thereupon of a better hope
[76] through [77] For these have been made (*or*, become) priests [78] he
[79] hath Jesus become [80] covenant
[81] have become priests in great number [82] hindered from continuing
[83] hath his priesthood unchangeable, *or*, a priesthood that doth not pass away
[84] completely [85] separated [86] once for all
[87] appointeth [88] after [89] perfected

CHAP. V. The high-priesthood of Christ is now formally introduced for fuller discussion. It has been mentioned in every chapter of the Epistle (i. 3, ii. 17, iii. 1, iv. 5), and clearly occupies a chief place in the writer's mind, as it does in other books of Scripture. The notion that this office of our Lord has only economic or temporary interest; that it belongs rather to the ancient law and to Jewish conceptions than to the Gospel, quite misleads. It is, indeed, a doctrine demanded by the express teaching of the New Testament and by human nature as illustrated in the religious sacrifices of all nations, and in the felt needs of the human conscience.

Two qualifications are said to be necessary in priests, and Christ is proved to have them both: the first is, that they should be able to feel for those whom they represent, and then that they should have the authority of a Divine appointment (vers. 1–4). Christ is thus shown to have both a Divine appointment and the requisite sympathy (vers. 5–10).

Ver. 1. **For** resumes the subject of discussion (see iv. 15), and gives a reason why Christ should possess the qualities here de-

scribed (ver. 5).—**Every priest.** The reasoning is suggested by the case of the Aaronic priesthood, and refers in detail to that; but the words are applicable to all priesthoods (*i.e.* to all who act for others in things pertaining to God).—**Taken as he is from among men** affirms part of the quality of a priest, and is so regarded by most commentators: others render the expression, as apparently does the English Version, 'when taken' (*i.e.* every merely human priest); and suppose that there is a contrast between human priests and the Son of God. But the former is the juster view, for the writer goes on to claim for Christ also the same human qualities in a higher degree (ver. 7, etc).—**Is ordained**; properly, 'is appointed;' 'ordained even as Aaron was [ordained],' misleads. Ordination in any technical sense is not here, but Divine appointment simply.—**For men**, *i.e.* on behalf of, not in the stead of. This last is indeed a possible meaning of the preposition in certain combinations (He was made a curse for us, etc.), but is not in the word itself, nor is it appropriate here.—**In things pertaining to God**; literally, 'things Godward,' our interests and business in relation to Him.—**Both gifts and sacrifices for sins** are naturally the offerings or gifts of the law other than sin-offerings and the sacrifices; 'for sins' belonging to the last only (see the same combination in viii 3 and ix. 9), and not, as Alford supposes, to both. It is true, however, that the 'sacrifices' were also gifts, the victim being the property of the offerer, and sometimes only gifts, and not properly sacrifices (for sin); while the gift was sometimes of the nature of a sacrifice. Both the ideas are blended in the work of our Lord, 'who *gave* Himself for us.' On the other hand, we are said, without any reference to *sin-offering*, to present our bodies living *sacrifices* (Rom. xii. 1). The fact is that the old Homeric meaning of the word to sacrifice (θύω) was to burn wine, etc., in the fire to the gods; its secondary meaning, to slay in sacrifice. From that one root came a double set of derivatives—incense, to burn incense, altar of incense (Thyine wood, *Thus*, etc.); and to sacrifice, to offer sacrifice, altar of sacrifice, etc.; and hence sacrifice is often and naturally used in the New Testament in the figurative sense, especially in St. Paul (Eph. v. 2; Phil. iv. 18).—**To offer** is the technical word common in this Epistle, but Alford says it is never found in St. Paul. The noun, however, is found (Rom. xv. 16; Eph. v. 2), though appropriately with another verb 'present,' 'give,' either because the sense is figurative (see above), and the ordinary verb would be too sacrificial, or because in the last passage he wants to call attention to the fact that Christ is offerer as well as victim.

Ver. 2. **Who**; rather, **being one able to have compassion**; literally, to be reasonably compassionate towards—a word found in the New Testament only here. The Stoic prided himself on being apathetic in relation to sin and misery, as he held the gods were. A sympathetic or emotional nature rejoices with those that rejoice, and weeps with those that weep. The true position of a priest in relation to those who are not only suffering, but are also guilty, is between the two. His is a blended feeling of sorrow and blame. Were there no sorrow, there would be no fitness for the office manward; were there no blame, there would be no holiness, and so no fitness for the office Godward. As standing between man and God, he feels (we may say it with reverence) for both; and herein consists His noblest quality.—**With the ignorant and the erring.** The persons for whom the priest acts are not innocent, or the function would cease; they are sinners, and are described as ignorant and out of the way (erring or, it may be, led out of the way). The first word is milder than the second, and describes an ignorance that may be without sin, though it is oftener an ignorance that is more or less sinful (see Lev. iv. 13, v. 18). There is generally sin in it, though not the sin of a wilful perverseness ('I **did** it *ignorantly* in unbelief,' 1 Tim. i. 13). The second word, though stronger than the first, is milder than is consistent with wilful conscious sin; it is going astray, or (in the passive voice) being led astray (see 1 Cor. vi. 9; Gal. vi. 7; 2 Tim. iii. 13). Possibly these words describe the feeling of the priest, who is supposed to be a man and himself a sinner (see next clause) towards those who are sinners, and who he may say are after all 'ignorant and deluded.' More probably, however, the words describe the *real* character of those for whom he is to act. All men are blameably ignorant, and are out of the way; every sin is want of knowledge, as well as want of wisdom; we all have gone astray, and for all the priest acts; those being excepted who are presumptuous and defiant sinners for whom no sacrifice could be accepted. The very office of the priest implies some desire to be forgiven, or at all events the cessation of perverse persistence in sin. Sympathy for all such is the duty and the qualification of the true priest; made the more easy that he is himself beset with infirmity, and the more obligatory that he himself needs the same treatment. The *infirmity* here spoken of is clearly moral weakness, which makes men capable of sin, and leads to it.

Ver. 3. **And by reason hereof** (the true reading, though requiring no change in the English Version), *i.e.* the infirmity with which he is himself compassed.—**He ought** (under a double obligation, ethical and legal, with special reference in this instance to the first).—**As for the people even, so also for himself.** The reasoning applies to the Aaronic Priesthood, and also to all human priests. The provisions of the Jewish law in this respect are very clear (Lev. iv. 3–12), and especially for the service of the great day of Atonement, when the priest confessed for himself and his house, then for the priesthood in general, and then for all Israel (Lev. xvi.). Whether all this applies to Christ has been much discussed. Some have regarded it as spoken of human priests as distinguished from Christ; but it is more natural to regard it as true of all high priests in general, and then to allow the writer himself to show how far the Priesthood of Christ is like others, and how far it is unique; this he does as his argument proceeds (vers. 7, 8, and chap. vii. 28).

Ver. 4. A priest, moreover, who is God's agent as well as man's, has his appointment not from himself nor from man, but from God.—**And none taketh this honour** (*the office*, as the word frequently means) **to himself** (upon himself, as we now say), *i.e.* legally, acceptably to the chief party in this arrangement; **but when called of God, even as Aaron was.** The Divine ordinance which made Aaron and his sons high priests continued

long in the theocracy, and was vindicated against the usurpation of other Levites and of kings (Num. xvi. 17; 2 Chron. xxvi. 16–21). But long before the date of this Epistle the ordinance had been broken, and the Roman power contemptuously set it aside. Some have thought that the writer rebukes these irregularities in this verse, but probably he is speaking of what was in fact the law and the proprieties of the case without any side-reference to later abuses. Who are to present offerings to God, and whom God will accept, are questions that belong clearly to God Himself. We must carefully distinguish, however, between the prophetical office and the priestly. All Christians that have the Gospel may prophesy; every man who has found the cross is competent and is authorised, nay, is even required to tell others the road. Warnings against preaching the Gospel, derived from the history of Korah and Abiram, are specially inappropriate under a dispensation when all are commanded to tell what God has done for them, when not only the Spirit and the Bride, but every one that heareth is to say, Come. The real lesson lies in another direction. We have under the Gospel one Priest only in the deeper sense of that word, a Mediator and a sacrifice, who has made complete atonement for sin. The usurpation of His office is on the part of those who assume to themselves the name of priests, and pretend to offer sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. Here is the sin of Korah; the more guilty as Christ is greater than Aaron, and as His perfect sacrifice is superior to the shadowy sacrifices of the ancient Law.

Ver. 5. These requisites of the high priests are all found in Christ, and found in Him in such a degree as proves Him to be superior to all others.—**Thus Christ also** (as well as others) **glorified not himself,** took not the honour upon Himself (see John viii. 54) **to be made High Priest, but he** (the Father) **who spake to him: Thou art my Son; I have this day begotten thee.** He it was that made Him Priest, and made Him Priest in the very passage that speaks of Him as 'Son;' the 'Only-begotten.' This deeper meaning which regards the Sonship that Christ had before His incarnation as itself having reference to redemption, and to Christ's place therein, is favoured by the Fathers. Others who regard the quotation as giving honour to the Son without making that honour an assertion of His Priesthood, interpret simply Christ did not Himself assume the office of Priest; God who acknowledges Him as His Son in a sense that raises Him above all creatures, God gives Him the office.

Ver. 6. Then follows a correction (according to the second of the above interpretations), or an assertion in plainer terms (according to the first) of this appointment.—**Even as also he saith in another** (literally, 'a different') **place**; a psalm written with a different purpose; a quotation from the 110th Psalm, which is generally accepted by the Jews themselves as Messianic, showing that if Jesus is the Christ it is by a Divine appointment He holds the character and performs the functions of a Priest—a perpetual Priest—the only Priest—with honours and qualifications higher and greater than those of Aaron.

Vers. 7–10. Having shown how Christ has one qualification for the Priesthood, the authority of a Divine appointment, based in part upon His relation to the Father, the writer now reverts to the other qualifications, His fitness to bear with our infirmities, and to sympathize with us in suffering. The four verses really make one sentence. Stripped of its modifying clauses, it is briefly: 'Who, though He was, in His own nature, Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and being perfect (having completed the sacrifice He had to offer, and finished the training that was to fit Him for His office), He became the author (the cause) of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being publicly, solemnly addressed as High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.'

Ver. 7. **In the days of his flesh** ('of His humanity,' Arabic), *i.e.* during His earthly life, especially in the closing part of it, as contrasted with the glorified state on which He entered when His high-priesthood began.—**When he had offered up,** etc.; rather, 'in that He offered up was heard, and though He was a Son . . . learned;' or, 'having offered up and being heard . . . He learned obedience,' etc. All the tenses refer to one and the same process of discipline; they describe His life not in distinct and successive portions, but as a whole, though no doubt the description is specially true of His final agony.—**Having offered up** is the regular sacrificial word used throughout this Epistle, and it probably implies that while all the sufferings these words describe were fitting our Lord for His priestly office, they were also part of what He had to suffer as the bearer of our sin.—**Prayers and supplications.** The word for 'prayers' expresses a deep *feeling of need;* the word 'supplications' is a term taken from the olive branch wrapped with wool which was held out of old as an earnest entreaty for protection and help, and is a stronger word than the former. 'Prayers and entreaties' may represent, therefore, the general sense. Each may involve the other, but they differ in this way: St. Luke (who of the Evangelists dwells most on this human side of Christ's life) tells us often that Christ prayed, and then again that 'being in an agony he prayed *more earnestly*' (xxii. 44).—**With strong crying and tears**; with a most vehement outcry, an outcry of intensest feeling. Such was His first great cry on the cross: 'My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' (Matt. xxvii. 46); and such was the cry that accompanied His last utterance (Luke xxiii. 46). His tears are also once named at least (xix. 41), and seem implied in such passages as Matt. xxvi. 38, xxvii. 46. The very agony of the final struggle has its prelude at an earlier stage (John xii. 27), and was not without its parallel even in the wilderness. These prayers and entreaties were addressed unto **him that was able to save from death, and he was heard in that he feared.** This clause has been variously interpreted. One guide to its meaning is, that whatever it was He prayed for, the Father heard and gave (literally, or by a better equivalent) what he asked. A second guide to its meaning is that the last clause, 'in that He feared,' is rightly translated in the English Version. 'Was heard, and so delivered from that which He feared—either from His own fear, or from the thing He feared,' though largely supported, is inadmissible.—The word 'fear' is used only of the fear of caution, of reverence, of devoted submission, never of the fear of terror. The interpretation of the Authorised Version, adopted by all the Greek expositors, is accepted,

after a full examination of passages in ancient writers by Bleek and Alford, and is required in Heb. xii. 28, the only other place where it is found in the New Testament. The adjective, moreover, which is found only in Luke, means always 'devout' (Luke ii. 25, and Acts). Does it mean, then, that Christ prayed to Him who was able to save from death that He Himself might not die? Impossible—He came to 'give Himself a ransom for many.' He knew that He was to be betrayed into the hands of the Gentiles, and was to be scourged and crucified.—With ever-increasing clearness He had announced the fact to His disciples; and if now He prayed for such deliverance, His prayer was *not* heard. Does it mean that He prayed God to deliver Him from death after having died—a prayer that was fulfilled when the 'God of Peace,' God reconciled to the world through the death of His Son, 'brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ'? So Ebrard, Brown, and others interpret it. But neither is this exactly the meaning. What He prayed to be delivered from was not the mere dying, nor was it the grave into which, when dead, He was to enter. His prayer had rather reference to the agony of the final struggle. As Mediator He saw in death all it involved; the curse of the broken law, the penalty due to sin, the wrath of God, not primarily against Himself as the Holy One, but against the guilty, in whose room He stood, and against Him as He had taken their place. The weight of the Father's wrath, and the need in that dread hour of continued love to man, and of continued trust in God; the fear lest by one moment of passionate impatience, in forgetfulness of the force of His temptation, through a natural recoil against the injustice and cruelty of His murderers, through possible distrust of Him who now seemed to have left Him to His own unassisted power—these were among the elements of His agony. And He could bear and resist them only through the cautious handling of the solemnities of His position, and by the reverent submission of His entire nature unto God. And God heard Him, not by delivering Him from the necessity of dying, not even by raising Him from the dead, but by strengthening Him to bear all (Luke xxii. 43), and by making the pangs of death the birth-throes of an endless life for him, and for all who were to believe. Had there been any impatience or distrust His prayer must have remained unanswered, and His whole work have been frustrated. On the cross was there the deepest prostration of human weakness, and the utmost willingness to bear the burden whereby we are disburdened; as there was also the perfecting of the work and of the discipline which fitted Him to be a Priest, both in relation to God and in relation to ourselves.

Ver. 8. **Though he were a Son**; more accurately, '**though he was Son**' (there is no conditional thought expressed, but a strong assertion); literally, though being [in His own nature] Son, **yet learned he his obedience** (not obedience simply, but the obedience He practised, or the obedience which was to fit Him for His office) **by** (really the source of His knowledge) **the things which he suffered.—Son.** The absence of the article again calls attention to His relation to the Father (see i. 2).—**Learned by suffering.** There is in the Greek a play upon the words (comp. *παθήματα μαθήματα, troubles* our best *teachers—discipline* essential to *discipleship*).

Ver. 9. **Being made perfect**, not only brought to the end, the completion of His learning and suffering, but having acquired all the necessary merit, power, and sympathy needed in His office after His obedience unto death.—**He became the author** (literally, the cause, the personal principle) **of eternal salvation.** A salvation not partial or temporal, like the atonements of the law, but a complete and ever-enduring deliverance from evil in all its forms and in every degree. It is the salvation of the soul which is immortal. It is the opposite of eternal condemnation. It takes in grace and glory; and Christ is its author or cause through the lasting virtue of His blood and righteousness, His obedience and suffering, His intercession and gifts.—**To all who obey him,** who believe the truth He reveals, who live under the influence of it, and who acknowledge Him as their Master and Lord. His obedience unto death is the ground of our hope, and His obedience unto death is the model to which our life is to be conformed.

Ver. 10. **Being called of God**; rather, **being addressed** (not the same word as in verse 4) **by God as High Priest**: the title of honour wherewith the Son made perfect through suffering was saluted by the Father openly and solemnly when He made Him sit at His own right hand. Christ was Priest on earth (see ver. 6) when He made oblation of Himself unto God; but having now entered the heavenly sanctuary, He was publicly received by God as High Priest, the priestly and high-priestly offices being united in Him.—**After the order of Melchisedec,** there being a resemblance in many particulars between the two, and especially in the antiquity, the dignity, the perpetuity of their respective offices, with the usual fuller depth of meaning in the antitype, the reality, than in the shadowy symbol.

The exact nature of the obedience which Christ learned through suffering has been much discussed. Many commentators hold the view that it was His obedience *as Priest* whereby He became qualified for His office and the consequent sympathy of which He became capable. He learned to feel what obedience involved, and so became a merciful High Priest in things pertaining to God. The idea that His obedience to the Divine law generally was increased by suffering seems to many inconsistent with His Divine nature and His personal holiness. But the language of the 8th verse seems to mean more than this explanation allows. He learned His *obedience*, not sympathy merely, nor merely priestly fitness for His work. Though Son, with all the love and trust of a Divine Son, He yet acquired and manifested a measure of obedience which else had been unattainable. Our Lord was man, proper man as well as God, and we must not so confound the two natures as to modify the attributes of either. As man He had an intellect like our own. He grew in wisdom, nay, even in favour with God and man. He had the faculty whereby He perceived the relation in which as man He stood to others, and felt the duties that relation involved. He had a will to decide His choice, and affections to impel Him to act. He was subject like ourselves to the great law of habit, whereby active principles become stronger through exercise, and are freed

from exhaustion or made mighty through meditation and prayer. As man, the second Adam was as capable of growth in holiness as the first. He was made, moreover, under the law subject to its requirements. Created under it, He was to be judged by it; and though this subjection was His own act, it was as complete as if He had claimed His descent entirely from the first transgressor. In this condition He was personally liable for all His acts. To Him the warning came as to us: 'Indignation and wrath upon every soul of man that doeth evil.' Under this law, and subject to this condition, Christ appeared. If He fulfil the law with absolute perfection He is accepted, and for us there is hope. If He fail, if through His own weakness, the force of temptation, the subtilty of the tempter, He be seduced in thought or in feeling, even for one moment, from the narrow path of perfect holiness, our ruin becomes irremediable and complete; and the blessed God is left to deplore the ruin which His own frustrated benevolence has made only the more touching and profound. One impatient desire, one selfish thought, one sinful feeling, would have done it all. His suffering was obedience, His obedience was intensest suffering from the beginning of His public ministry even to its close; and if He was subject to the laws of human growth, faculties strengthened by reason of use, emotion made more mighty and more tender, obedience more easy by repetition, we may say that as Christ was truly man His obedience was learned and perfected by suffering. This view of the human life of our Lord, and the awful responsibility which attached to every act and feeling of His life, amid forces of evil unparalleled in human history, gives us a higher conception of His sufferings than anything besides. Such suffering strengthened, developed, perfected His own nature, even as ours is to be perfected, while it fits Him in the highest degree to understand our struggles and to sympathize with them.

CHAP. V. 11–VI. 20. The writer, knowing how unprepared his readers were to admit that the Aaronic priesthood was inferior to that of Melchisedec and to that of Christ (who was the antitype of both), interrupts his argument by remonstrating with them on their spiritual ignorance (11–14), and urges them to attain higher knowledge (vi. 1–3), by the danger of apostasy (4–8), by his own hope of them founded on their former zeal (9–12), and by the encouragement which God's promise and oath give to persevering faith (12–20).

Ver. 11. **Of whom**; that is, of Melchisedec, in his superiority to Aaron, and as the type of Christ. The other interpretations, '**of Christ**,' and '**of which thing**,' are hardly defensible grammatically; the explanation just given is grammatically preferable, and is the same in sense.—**We**, not the writer and Timothy, but (as elsewhere in the Epistle, ii. 5, vi. 9, 11, and as is common in Paul's Epistles) the writer himself.—**Have many things** (literally, have much) **to say, and hard to be uttered**; rather, **hard to explain** to you.—**Seeing** (since) **ye are become** (having lost the quick sense of your new life, and relapsed, in part at least, into your old state) **dull in your hearing** (not easily made to understand).—**For while ye ought, on account of the time, to be teachers**, etc. Thirty years had passed since Pentecost, and some of you may have heard Christ the Lord; His apostles you have certainly heard. Churches were first formed among you, and most of you became believers years ago. Nor only a long time, but a trying time also; 'distress of nations,' 'men's hearts failing them for fear,' the 'shaking' foretold by the prophet. The *nature* of the time (not the length only) ought to have produced serious thought, earnest inquiry, and better understanding of what was coming upon the earth. They had not only made no progress,—they had retrograded.—**Ye have need that one teach you what is the nature of** (or, that some one teach you) **the very first principles of the oracles of God.** The first rendering is adopted by most commentators, ancient and modern, though the second is adopted by Bleek, Alford, and others. In neither case does it mean '*what* are the first principles,' but rather, what quality and meaning they have. The oracles of God in the plural means generally what God revealed,—the Divine utterance (Acts vii. 38; Rom. iii. 2),—while in the singular it meant that part where the revelation was given. The meaning here is not quite the same as in vi. 1: 'the doctrine of Christ,' though this meaning is implied. The Jews had sacrifices and ritual, a material temple, prophecies clearly foretelling the life and death of our Lord, and rudimentary Christianity; but though they had embraced the Gospel, they were failing to see what their own economy really meant, and they were in danger of going back from the Spirit to the flesh, from the reality to the type, overlooking the significance of the simplest parts of their system,—'the elements,' as the Apostle Paul calls them also (Gal. iv. 3, 9). The description here given may mean the plain doctrines of the Gospel, such as are specified in the first verse of the next chapter; but the peculiar language of this verse ('elements,' 'oracles') points rather to the significance of the elementary rites and truths of Judaism itself, the very things he goes on in later chapters to explain. Christianity is the Law unveiled, and you would understand the general principles of the new economy if you rightly understood the old; a like rebuke may be seen in Luke xxiv. 25–27.—**And are become** (as in ver. 11) **such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat** (solid food). You have gone back into a second childhood, and need to understand the pictures and shadows of the ancient Law,—things intended for the infant state of the Church,—or, possibly, need to study again those easier parts of the Gospel which men accept at the beginning of the Divine life. The Fathers generally understood by '**milk**' and by '**first principles**' the Incarnation; but that is itself a profound mystery, and the writer has already affirmed and discussed it. The comparison of doctrines to milk and food is common in Philo, and is found in both Testaments. St. Paul uses both in 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

Vers. 13 and 14 give the reason why the further teaching is hard to explain.—**For every one who useth milk** (takes it as his ordinary food, and can digest nothing else) **is unskilled** (literally, inexperienced) **in the word of righteousness**; not in the Gospel as the true and righteous word (Grotius, Brown, and others); not in rightly ordered speech (Delitzsch); not quite the word of righteousness, as Melchisedec is king of righteousness, as if there were a play upon the words (Bleek); but rather, that message, that Gospel of which righteousness, imputed and imparted, in its double

form of justification and holiness, is the central truth. The man who fails to see the spiritual significance of the law, or, having once seen it, goes back to his old condition of imperfect vision, neither knows the burden of human guilt and the consequent need of Divine atonement, nor the necessity of true holiness.—**For he is a babe (an infant)**, and takes the same place among spiritual seers as an infant takes in the perception of worldly interests.

Ver. 14. **But solid food belongs to the full grown**, to the spiritually mature (so the word often means in Greek writers). It is the same word in vi. 1 ('let us go on unto *perfection*'). Then follows the description of them.—**Even those who by reason of** (by virtue of, not by means of) **use** (their long use, their habit) **have their senses** (properly their organs of sense, *i.e.* the inner organs of the soul) **exercised** (by spiritual gymnastics; only it is healthy *work* also, and not play; comp. 1 Tim. iv. 7, and Heb. xii. 11) **to discern** (literally, 'with the view to discriminate between') **good and evil.** *To discern* what is good and noble and what is bad and mischievous. The child is easily imposed upon: he may be induced to take even poison if it is sweetened to his taste; but a man has learnt by the discrimination which practice gives to make a distinction between things which differ, to 'refuse the evil and choose the good,' the very discrimination in which children fail (Deut. i. 39; Isa. vii. 16).

To have time for learning, time which is rich in lessons, and make no progress, is itself retrogression. Growth is the condition of all healthy life, physical, mental, spiritual. Not to grow in grace is to become dull and feeble; it is to retain in the system what ought to be replaced by new or added knowledge or feeling. It makes men specially susceptible to disease, and is the sure precursor of decay. The apostolic guard against apostasy is here and elsewhere to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. xvii. 18).

CHAP. VI. 1. It must be carefully marked that this chapter does not begin a new subject; still less is it implied that the first principles of the Gospel have been considered in previous chapters, and now the writer proceeds to doctrines that are more profound. It is all part of the argument begun in ver. 11, and is a digression on the danger and weakness of the Hebrew Christians, and indeed of us all, the writer included, unless we aim at higher knowledge and clearer understanding.

Ver. 1. **Therefore**; rather, wherefore, *i.e.* for *which* (not for that) reason—viz., because the Christian cannot remain a child, but must either grow or decay, and because you yourselves seem decaying, losing even your perception of the meaning of your economy.—**Let us leave** (behind, as something which should be done with) **the principles of the doctrine of Christ** (literally, the word or instruction of the beginning of Christ, the elementary truths with which men began when they first believe or preach the Gospel, the things mentioned in the next verse). 'The first principles of the oracles of God' describe the primary and essential truths taught in Judaism. 'The principles of the doctrine of Christ' represent the corresponding truths of the Gospel.—**And press on unto perfection** (maturity, the state of full-grown men). A question is raised here on which the commentators widely divide. Have these words to do with the writer's task, in which he unites his readers with himself in his work, or have they to do with the hearers' condition and their need of a spiritual manhood, in which case he unites himself with them in their deficiencies and duty? Is he urging them to listen to his arguments, or is he urging them to greater advances in holiness? Most authorities favour the former view. Against this interpretation is the fatal objection that the writer has affirmed that they are not fit for such instruction. The meaning seems therefore to be, that he puts himself by their side, and urges himself and them to seek such maturer knowledge as will increase their spiritual discernment and promote their stedfastness. Not mere teaching which the writer alone has to give, but knowledge and life, which his readers are to share with him.—**Wherefore**, seeing that we (you and I) are children, not grown men, **let us**, etc. He then proceeds to name six particulars which are specimens of the 'first principles' of the Gospel. Two of these refer to the *spiritual requirements* of Christianity, two to the introductory rites, and two to its final sanctions; or better, the six particulars are really two essential qualities of Christian life, followed by four subjects of doctrine—rites and sanctions. These former (to repent and believe) the Hebrew Christians ought not to have to do again, and the other four they ought not to have to learn again.—**Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith in God.** 'Laying again' describes naturally the preacher's work, but as naturally the work of the hearer, who builds his own character and busies himself with every part of the process. The foundation consists of repentance, the true inward change of heart, without which no man can see or enter the kingdom (John iii. 3, 5).—**Repentance from dead works** (perhaps works devoid of all spiritual life, consciousness, and power, but more likely, from the use of the same phrase in chap. ix. 14, guilty works, works that deserve death; see 1 Kings ii. 26), **and faith in God** as having fulfilled the promise in the gift and death of His Son.—**Of the doctrine of baptisms, and the laying on of hands.** The form of the word for 'baptism' means 'baptizing,' as distinguished from 'baptism,' and is generally applied in the New Testament to the washings of the ancient law. It probably includes also the baptism of John and of Christ. The nature of each, and the distinction between them, became important practical questions with the Jews in the first age. The laying on of hands had several uses in the early Church. With that rite the sick were healed; pastors and elders were admitted to their offices; the Holy Ghost was given, and converts were fully admitted into the fellowship of the Church, generally with the impartation of spiritual gifts also. It is to this last chiefly that the expression refers.—**And of resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.** All these particulars are under the grammatical government of 'the doctrine,' showing that it is not to the facts themselves, but to the doctrine and the belief of the facts, the writer is referring as the foundation of the Christian life. These were Jewish doctrines as well as Christian, only they were brought into clearer light by the Gospel. The resurrection is that of both good and evil (John v. 29); and the judgment (here the sentence, rather than the pro-

cess, though both forms of the word are used for the judgment, see x. 27) is called eternal because its results are eternal, and so final (Matt. v. 46). That these first principles of the Gospel were proclaimed by the first teachers as principles which a man must know and believe in order to be a Christian, will be seen by an examination of the passages given in the margin of the text. The Hebrew believers are exhorted to leave them just as St. Paul tells us he himself left them, 'forgetting the things that were behind;' not because they are unimportant, for they are in truth essential, but because to stop there is to risk our stedfastness. How important these elementary principles are is clear from the fact that there is no true godliness without them; how unsatisfactory if Christians have no profounder knowledge is clear from the fact that the divisions and the lesser errors that have paralyzed the powers and marred the beauty of the churches of Christ have nearly all originated with men who understand first principles, and had no clear perception of anything beyond. We must have godly people in our churches, or they are not churches of Christ at all; but if they are ignorant godly people, with small insight into the spirit and nature of the Gospel and of the Church, these churches will be robbed of half their power and of half their holiness.

Ver. 3. **And this will we do.** Let us try to raise each other to the higher ground of matured intelligence.—**If so be that God permit** (favour and help). Whether any of us have so far forfeited His grace as to be incapable of further progress, God only knows; the writer hopes the best (ver. 9); but there is a backsliding, an apostasy, from which it is impossible to return. The position is therefore very solemn, will anyhow need special help, and the work may be even impossible.

Vers. 4–7. These verses have deep significance and are difficult of interpretation. In the early Church a sect arose who gathered from them that those who sinned after baptism either generally or especially by joining in idolatrous worship under persecution, were to be finally and permanently excluded from the churches, and could not be forgiven; and hence baptism itself was often postponed till death drew near. The Church of Rome, on the other hand, refused for a considerable time to give this Epistle a place in the Canon, because it seemed to teach a doctrine at variance with what is taught in the accepted apostolic writings. In later times, those who deny the perseverance of the saints find in these verses and in others a little later (x. 26) the chief support of their system, as the defenders of that doctrine may perhaps have sometimes been more anxious to confute their argument than to give a fair interpretation of these texts. Nor can it be questioned that the passages have created great anxiety in real Christians who, sinking into spiritual languor, or betrayed into gross sins, as was David or Peter, have been thrown into despondency, unable 'to lay hold of the hope set before them in the Gospel.' Of the two passages it may be observed generally that the word '*if*' ('if they shall fall away,' *if* we sin wilfully) is not found in the Greek of either of them. It has been urged against the translators of the Authorised Version that they inserted '*if*' for the purpose of lessening the difficulty of the passage; but this should not be hastily assumed. In the Revised Version the '*if*' is retained in the second passage, though it is struck out in the first; and the 'if' is so natural a translation of the Greek that it is inserted in the 8th verse: '*if* it bear;' where the Greek is simply 'but bearing,' 'on its bearing.' We need not blame the translators either earlier or later; it is enough to note that a common solution of the difficulty of the two passages, that they are only *supposed* cases, is not tenable. On the other hand, very few of the commentators note that the persons whom it is impossible to help are described by words that indicate continuous character and not a single act. Those who fall away are spoken of as *continuing to crucify* to themselves the Son of God afresh, while those who sin wilfully are not guilty of a single sin, but of *going on sinning*. The case, therefore, is the case of those who go back to a life of sin,—who take their place with the crucifiers of our Lord. Not single sins, but settled character or habitual practice, is what is condemned. Three principles more need to be remembered: *every Christian* grace has its counterfeit, and all the common privileges of the Gospel are shared by multitudes who make no saving use of them. This is the first. Many of the rulers of the Jews *believed*, and yet they 'loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.' There is a real faith that cannot save; there is a repentance, a worldly sorrow, which cannot be distinguished for a time from the godly sorrow of the true convert, as there is a 'joy' with which some receive the word and yet have no root in themselves. There is a hope which God will not honour; there is a holiness that is Pharisaism or deception; there is an enlightenment as universal as the knowledge of the Gospel (John i. 9); there are miraculous powers shared apparently by Judas, and certainly by men whom Christ never knew as their Lord (Matt. vii. 22). And, secondly, though there are difficulties on both sides, the general teaching of the New Testament is, that if there be true union with the Lord Jesus Christ it is never to be broken off. If the light of Divine grace be once kindled in the soul, it is never to be extinguished. Sins once forgiven are forgiven for ever. The law written on the heart by God Himself is distinguished from that written on stone, and is not to be effaced; the principle of the Divine life once implanted is kept and guarded even to the end (see Heb. x. 19; John x. 15, 17, 28, 29; 1 Pet. i. 4, 5). But, thirdly, the precepts and warnings of the New Testament are addressed to men who are still in a state of probation. Every command that deals with essential Christian grace, every promise made to character, as in the Sermon on the Mount, all the watchfulness which Christians are exhorted to practise, and which inspired men practised ('I keep my body under, lest having preached the Gospel to others I should be a castaway'), are based upon the supposition, not that *really saved men will perish*, but that any professing Christian man may. We are startled to find the truth so sharply set forth in passages like the one before us; but the truth really underlies the teaching of every Epistle, and practically of every modern sermon. Most startling of all, the warnings and the invitations of the blessed God in the Old Testament, and of our Lord in the New, both of whom may be supposed to know the actual character and the final destiny of those they addressed, speak ever as if the ruin of all

were possible, nor can there be probation under any other arrangement. To argue that therefore neither the ruin nor the salvation is known or certain, would be shallow philosophy. We cannot solve the mystery, but we ought to recognise it, and to note that a moral government under which God reveals to every one beforehand his final destiny, speaks or acts as if it were fixed, and thus removes the condition which moral government implies (the force, viz., of motives as if all were uncertain), is a contradiction in terms. There is, of course, an added difficulty in this chapter, that those which are enlightened are not *supposed* to fall away, but are stated to do so. The difficulty will be examined in due time.

Ver. 4. **For.** A reason for each of the previous clauses: 'This will we do,' for the case is urgent; without further knowledge you may fall away. 'If God permit,' for the case may be even now hopeless, and certainly is so without His help.—**It is impossible** (see below) **for those who have been once for all enlightened**; once for all a process that needs not, or admits not of repetition. 'Enlightened,' a word which, when applied to persons, means 'instructed,' 'taught.' When applied to professing Christians, it means that they have been made acquainted with the principles of the Gospel, and have received 'the knowledge of the truth,' as it is expressed in Heb. x. 26: they have known the way of righteousness (2 Pet. ii. 20, 21). In the later history of doctrine, the word 'enlightenment' is used as a synonym, it is said, for baptism, and so many have interpreted here; but in fact it is not used in the Fathers for baptism simply, but for the illumination of the new birth of which baptism was the symbol (Alford). This interpretation was set aside in favour of the common meaning of the word by Erasmus, and nearly all modern commentators have adopted his view.—**And have had taste of the heavenly gift,** *i.e.* of the gift that is made known by this enlightenment. Some refer the gift to Christ or the Spirit, or forgiveness, or salvation in Christ (2 Cor. ix. 15); but the connecting particle in the Greek (τε) shows that the gift refers rather to what is implied in the previous instruction,—a heavenly gift it is in its origin and results.—**And became partakers of the Holy Ghost.** Partakers, the noun and the verb are common in St. Paul and in this Epistle. When men had been instructed and had tasted of the blessings which instruction revealed to them, the next stage of the Christian life was to become partakers of the gifts and influences of the Holy Spirit, not excluding the influences which bad men may resist, for He has much to do even with hearts in which He never takes up His abode.—**And have tasted the good word of God.** Tasted, so as to feed upon the rich inheritance of promise and hope, which men have seized in all ages, even when slow to justify their right to it by consistency and holiness. This use of the word 'good,' as descriptive of what is comforting and sustaining, is common in Scripture (see Josh. xxiii. 15; Zech. i. 11).—**As well as the powers of the world to come:** the gifts and experience of the new economy, its powers both miraculous and spiritual. To taste these is to enjoy the blessings and advantages which follow from the fulfilment of the Divine word. Whatever is striking in evidence, glorious in teaching, solemn and impressive in sanctions—all are included in the powers which these men had felt.—**And have fallen away** (not, if they should fall); fallen not into sin simply, but so as to renounce the Gospel, so as to go back with a will into a life of sin (chap. x. 26), so as to depart from the living God (chap. iii. 12), returning to the false religions they had left, or to determined infidelity and ungodliness. Such are the characters the writer describes; they possessed the knowledge of Gospel truth, and had a certain amount of enjoyment from that knowledge (note the genitive case after 'taste'); they were partakers of the common influences and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; they enjoyed the promises of the Gospel (note the accusative case after 'taste') more fully than some other truths in which they had been instructed, and had felt most of the influences of the new economy miraculous, moral, and spiritual; and yet after all they had abandoned the Gospel and continued to denounce both it and its founder. Every part of this description applies probably to Judas, whose case seems to have been in the writer's mind; and yet he was never a real believer, but 'a son of Perdition' even from the first. Such was the primitive apostate. His counterpart in modern times is easily described: men have made great attainments in the knowledge of Christianity, have had considerable enjoyment of it; they have been striven with by the Holy Spirit, have enjoyed largely the promises and hopes of the Gospel; and yet through neglect of its ordinances, through fear of the persecution to which it subjects them, they have been led to deny its Divine origin, and proclaim its founder a deceiver or mad. They have tried the Gospel and the Lord of the Gospel, and after trial they have rejected both. These miserable men are described as having fallen away. That was the fatal step which they took once for all (so the tense implies). The state in which they now are is described in the other participles, 'crucifying to themselves, as they still do, the Son of God afresh, and putting Him, as they still do, to open shame.' It is not the act that ruins them, it is the habit; and it is partly through that settled habit that it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. Some indeed regard 'impossible' as used in a popular sense. It is *difficult* to renew them, so the Latin of D. translates here, and so several commentators have held; but that meaning of the word is unknown in the New Testament. Others regard the impossibility as referring to man rather than God, and hold the meaning to be: We cannot renew men whose hearts are so hard, and whose condition is so desperate as theirs. God can, but we cannot. No new argument, no new motive can we use; the terror, the love, the warnings, the entreaties of the Gospel—all have been applied and understood and resisted. Nothing but a miracle can change and save them. Neither of these explanations, however, is satisfactory. The word 'impossible' is very strong, and it seems immoveable. Just as in chap. x. 26, the writer, after describing the sacrifice of Christ, tells us that if men reject and despise it and go back to a life of sin, no other sacrifice remains for them; there awaits them nothing but the fearful reception of judgment: so here, if men deny Christ and crucify Him to themselves—their treatment of Him in their own hearts; if they renounce Him as a blasphemer and impostor—their treatment

of Him before the world; and that after having seen the truth and felt the attractiveness of His teaching and life, it is impossible to renew them. The language, as thus explained, is not a mere truism, as Delitzsch holds ('it is impossible to renew to repentance those who fall away, except they repent'); it is rather a strong assertion of an important truth. The contemptuous rejection of Christ's *sacrifice* means no forgiveness, and the contemptuous rejection of Christ's teaching and *grace* means no renewal and no personal holiness. There may be a sense in which each is an identical proposition, but each meets the very purpose of the writer and the needs of the readers. They were tempted to think there was still forgiveness and holiness for them, even if they renounced Christ and treated Him as their fathers had done. The writer warns them that to reject Christ—to reject Him after all they have known and felt, under circumstances, therefore, that made their rejection practically final—was to give up all hope, all possibility of salvation. What would become of them if somehow they had ceased to crucify Him, ceased to scorn and to denounce Him; if they gave up the life of sin to which, in chap. x., he speaks of them as having willingly returned, we need not discuss, for the case is not supposed. What they were in danger of saying was: There is renewal and forgiveness in the old economy, in heathenism, nay, even in ungodliness. We believe it in spite of Divine teaching and our long experience to the contrary. We may give up this new religion, may trample upon the blood of the covenant, insult the Spirit of God, and live as we please, and yet be saved. What else can meet such doctrine but the strongest rebuke, and the most absolute denial? For men—*out of Christ*—because they have knowingly and wilfully rejected Him, renewal and forgiveness are alike impossible. Neither man nor God can save them.

Vers. 7 and 8. Awful as this teaching is, men accept it in the sphere of nature and recognise the equity of the arrangement.—**For land** (not the earth) **that hath drunk in** (not that drinketh in: the showers precede the fruitfulness) **the rain that cometh oft upon it** (that keeps coming, not in drenching but frequent showers, and comes for the purpose of making it fruitful, probably the force of the genitive with ἐπί). So the land is described; it is not impenetrable rock from which the rain runs off, but land that sucks in the rain. Rain itself is in Scripture the emblem both of Divine truth (Isa. lv. 10) and of Divine influence (Isa. xliv. 3). The whole description, therefore, applies to those who have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come. . . . **And**, the result is in one case that the mother earth made fruitful from above, **brings forth herbage** (edible plants, grass, corn, food) **fit for those on whose account, moreover** (not 'by whom,' as Vulgate, Luther, Calvin, and others, a sense the Greek will not admit), **it is tilled** (carefully cultivated, a strong word); such fertility making a due return for the rain of heaven and the toil of man, partakes of blessing from God, in that He rewards it according to His own law (Matt. xiii. 12) and promise (John xv. 2) with more abundant returns.

Ver. 8. **But when it** (or the first clause may be repeated: 'but when the same kind of land under like conditions') **bears** (produces, not so noble a word as 'brings forth,' which expresses something like natural birth) **thorns and thistles** (so generally, Matt. vii. 16, etc.)—these products of the curse—**it is rejected** (being tried, it is proved worthless and reprobate, a word occurring seven times in N. T., and only in Paul's Epistles), **and is nigh unto a curse; whose end** (not the end of the curse, De Wette, Bleek, etc., but the end of the land; see Ps. cix. 13, Heb., *his* end shall be) **is for** (or unto) **burning**. With great tenderness the writer softens the language of the original curse (Gen. iii. 17 and 18), and pronounces land of this kind to be *nigh* unto cursing, in great danger of it, and the end to be in the direction of burning—an end it may reach and will reach unless there be a great change. What this burning is has been much discussed. Are they the weeds, that the soil may be made fruitful, as were the weeds of old (*Virg. Geor.* i. 84–93)? No; the weeds and soil also. What is burnt is the soil, and that means destruction; so it is in Deut xxix. 22, 23, and elsewhere; comp. John xv. 16. . . . Each clause of this analogy answers to the description already given in the previous verses. The tillers of the soil are Christian workers; they for whom the ground is tilled are the Father (1 Cor. iii. 9), and the Son as heir (chap. iii. 6; Matt. xxi. 38). The rain represents the oft-repeated manifestations of truth and grace, and the drinking in of the rain symbolizes the apprehension and the reception of them; if there be fruitfulness there will be ever-increasing blessing; and if there be no fruitfulness, the case may not be hopeless; but it is nearing that state, and is preparing for judgment, and the judgment is destruction. How applicable all this description is to our own age, as to every age, need not be shown.

Vers. 9, 10. After these solemn warnings comes the outburst of hope and love.—**But, beloved** (only here in this Epistle), **we are persuaded** (not the middle voice as often, 'we have the inward confidence,' but the passive,—we are led to the conviction,—we are persuaded by evidence which justifies the conclusion, the evidence being given in the next verse. The whole expression, as Alford and Delitzsch note, resembles Rom. xv. 14). —**Better things** (either 'in your moral state' or 'in your final destiny;' both are really combined), **and things that accompany salvation** (rather, things that lay hold of,—that are in immediate connection with,—so that he who has the one has the other); **though** (notwithstanding that) **we thus speak** (talk, not now only, but again and again). The better things, and things connected with salvation, are the holy dispositions they possessed (not the external privileges and spiritual gifts only), together with the final issues of that holy disposition in continued stedfastness and eternal life. They had 'received the knowledge of the truth in the love of it' (the exactest definition that can be given of true and saving faith), and being rooted and grounded in love, he hoped they would persevere and be preserved (the two sides of perseverance) in believing even till the completion of their salvation.

Ver. 10. **For** (and he has reason for this conviction) **God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love** ('labour of' [love] is without adequate support; it was probably taken from the parallel passage, 1 Thess. i. 3) **which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye ministered to the saints and do** (or still) **minister**. Their 'work' was their whole Christian life of

active obedience (so of ministers, 1 Cor. iii. 13; so of men generally, Rom. ii. 15; and of Christians, 1 Thess. i. 3). Their love shown to God's name is not the love with regard to or for the sake of His name, but the love towards it (see Rom. v. 8, etc.). The object of their love was the name of God—God Himself as revealed to us, 'the God and Father of our Lord,' and the God and Father of all who believe; and this love they manifested by ministering, and continuing to minister, to those by whom that name was known and confessed and loved. Their work and love are clearly described in chap. x. 32–34. The ministry was one of sympathy, and the help shown largely to those of their own nation. 'Ministering to the saints' is generally used in Scripture of help given to the Jewish Christians in Palestine, not because this expression of Christian love was to be restricted to them, but because they had then most need. This active Christian life, this love towards God shown in generous help to His servants, gives the writer hope that they are really God's children, and that, therefore, God will not forget them. 'He is just, and will not forget,' is the strong language he uses. Some commentators (Dr. J. Brown and others) regard 'righteous' as equivalent to 'faithful,' shrinking apparently from implying that the remembering of the grace we exercise is a matter of righteousness with Him, and quoting 2 Thess. i. 6 ('God is not unfaithful') as the true explanation. That is no reason, however, for changing the meaning of the word; and the two words, faithful and righteous, are combined in a very similar passage (1 John i. 9). The whole case is well explained by Delitzsch. Not only is it true, when we believe and are holy, that God is bound by righteousness to fulfil what He has promised; not only is it true, when we repent and plead the mediation of His Son, that God is bound by what is due to Him, as well as by His mercy to forgive; but it is true also that God's righteousness prompts Him to help and graciously reward them that are righteous. Whenever our acts correspond to His holiness and love, His righteousness leads Him to honour and bless the holiness and love which he has Himself created. The state in us that answers exactly to the holy love of God is our holy love, the fruit of faith in the revelation of God's holy love in Christ. Faith, as the acceptance by our hearts of the free unmerited grace of God, is itself the beginning of a holy loving state; and though the holiness of the faith is neither the meritorious ground nor the measure of our forgiveness, for of itself it cancels no sin, and can give no legal title to eternal life, it is none the less the object of God's approval, and it ever works by love, which is its noblest fruit. Faith and love and holiness all come into judgment and approval now, as they will come into final judgment at last. As states of heart they are right and holy, and it is *right* in God to commend and honour them. Love towards God, and towards all that bear His name, holy love, is the divinest grace and likest God, and the Holy God would cease to be holy if He did not approve and bless it. Yes! God is not *unrighteous* to forget our work and love! To forget them would be to violate His word and deny Himself (see 2 Tim. ii. 13).

Ver. 11. **But** (though persuaded of better things and recognising your work and love) **we desire** (not 'earnestly desire;' the preposition of the original indicates generally the object of the desire, not the intensity of it) **that every one of you do show the same diligence** (the diligence you have already shown in cultivating brotherly love) **with respect to the full assurance of your hope unto the end.** The stress is on 'the full assurance of your hope,' and 'unto the end.' 'Full assurance of hope' is no doubt the meaning, just as elsewhere we read of the full assurance of faith (Heb. x. 22), and the full assurance of understanding (Col. ii. 2). And we desire that you **show this quality and persevere in it even to the end.** The warnings of the Gospel are solemn, and yet Christians should live in the sunshine of an assured hope as the true safeguard against apostasy,—a hope, however, which it is difficult to maintain.

Ver. 12. In this hope ye need to persevere, **that ye become not slothful, but imitators** (a favourite Pauline word, see 1 Thess. i. 6, etc.) **of those who through faith and patience** (generally 'long-suffering') **inherit the promises.** 'Become not slothful,' a more delicate and hopeful way of expressing the exhortation than 'be.' The same word ('slothful') is used in v. 11, and the writer affirms that they had become so. But there the reference is to hearing, and is the opposite of vigorous thought and knowledge; here the reference is to Christian practice, and is the opposite of a diligent, earnest life. The sluggishness had already invaded the outer sense—the mental faculty; the writer's hope is that it may not reach the inner spiritual nature.—**But** rather **imitators.** The Greek word has a nobler meaning than this English equivalent. Scholars, it was said of old, should not only learn from their master, they should imitate (or, as we say, should *copy*) them. 'Copy' itself is also misleading. Both words indicate too much a servile superficial reproduction of the original, and hence the 'followers' of the Authorised Version is not unlikely to retain its place with 'imitators' in the margin. Patience or long-suffering is the mental state that bears long with the trials of the Christian life, and with the delays of the fulfilment of the Divine promise, with cheerful courage and without despondency or dejection. We believe what is promised, we patiently wait and endure, and in the end we shall come into the full enjoyment of the blessings themselves.—**Of them that inherit the promises.** What is it, then, they inherit, and who are they? A needless difficulty has been created by the statement of chap. xi. 39, that the Patriarchs did not obtain the promises, *i.e.* the blessings promised, and hence it is concluded either that what they inherited was simply a promise, not the blessing promised (Bleek), or that the words here used cannot refer to Abraham or to the spiritual blessings of the Gospel (Alford). But the argument is clear enough. Our fathers and others of later times walked by faith; they were stedfast amid the trials to which they were exposed; but they inherit the promised blessings, some in the fulness of God's grace on earth, and others in heaven. The specific instance quoted, that of Abraham, had a double fulfilment—the promise of a large seed, though long delayed, began to be fulfilled in his lifetime, and under the old economy (Deut. i. 10); its complete fulfilment belongs, of course, to the Gospel, and Abraham sees and enjoys it now, as he saw and enjoyed it even when the Epistle was written.

Vers. 13–20. The writer has sought to encourage the Hebrews by appealing to the Divine 'righteousness.' He who *graciously* made them fruitful would *righteously* treat them according to their fruitfulness, and would complete what He had begun (ver. 10). He now proceeds still further to encourage them by the fact that they had on their side the promise and the oath of God even as Abraham had.

Ver. 13. **For when God made** (or, had made) **promise to Abraham, because** (since) **he could swear by none greater, he sware by himself.** 'Made promise' may be translated (as is done by De Wette and others) 'had made promise,' with reference to previous promises, which were in substance repeated for the first time with an oath at the offering of Isaac. The only occasion on which God did swear was at Mount Moriah (Gen. xxii. 16–18). The quotation which is made in the next verse follows neither the Hebrew nor the Septuagint exactly, but it represents the sense. Similar promises without an oath were previously given (Gen. xiii. 16, xv. 5). 'Having made promise, He afterwards sware,' may therefore be the meaning, as is rather implied in ver. 18; but whether the promise and the oath refer to one occasion only or to two, the sense is unchanged. God made promise, and then, because there was none greater to whom He could appeal, He pledged His own life or being to the truth of the promise. Both promise and oath were immutable; the oath did not add to the intrinsic certainty of the promise, His word being ever as good as His bond; but it gave a deeper impression of its certainty, and was fitted to remove every doubt.

Ver. 14. **Saying, Surely.** The Hebrew of 'surely' is equivalent to 'I swear.' The unfamiliarity to the Greek translators of the Hebrew idiom for swearing has created various renderings of the Hebrew particles, and the meaning of the Greek particle has been misunderstood by the English translators in this Epistle (see chap. iv.). But there is now no question as to the sense. —**Blessing I will bless,** etc. The repetition indicates, according to the order of the original words, either the certainty of the thing promised ('Thou shalt surely die'), or the continuousness and consequent completeness of it. In neither case is it unmeaning.—**I will multiply thee.** The full expression in Genesis is: 'I will multiply *thy seed.*' Some think the change is significant, as if it was intended to connect the promise more closely with Abraham and his faith rather than with his seed (so De Wette and Bleek), and there may be force in this somewhat refined reasoning; but the multiplying is the essential thing, and, as Abraham could be multiplied only through his descendants, the promise in this shorter form leaves the meaning unchanged.

Ver. 15. **And so,** in this way, **having patiently waited,** believing and expecting the blessing amid all the trials and delays he was subjected to, he **obtained** what had been promised,—not so much the birth of Isaac (Alford), who was born before the oath, nor yet the restoration of Isaac from the dead (De Wette), a result that needed no waiting. The promise was really fulfilled in Abraham's becoming through Isaac the father of the people of promise, and then of 'many nations' under the Gospel through Him who was 'the seed' (Gal. iii. 16), and so of all who are through faith children of Abraham. This is the promise which, in the widest sense, Abraham has obtained. During his earthly life the fulfilment was very partial. At the exodus the seed are expressly said to have been as 'the stars for multitude' (Deut. i. 10); but the blessing of the nations was still to come. Nineteen hundred years later appeared the great Deliverer, whose day Abraham also saw, and now His kingdom is supreme, and Abraham has long since 'obtained' it all. This wide meaning of the promise is not properly a spiritualizing of the Old Testament; it is the true meaning on which St. Paul again and again insists (Gal. iii. 7; Rom. iv. 11). No trial of faith under any dispensation has been severer than Abraham's, and no reward more blessed or more complete. The lesson to 'Israel,' whether literal or spiritual, is decisive and clear.

Ver. 16. **For men swear** ('verily,' or 'indeed,' goes out on external authority) **by the greater**: by one who is above themselves, and can punish the wrong-doer; **and for confirmation, when any statement of theirs is contradicted the oath is final**; the question, as a legal question, is settled. The oath here spoken of includes two distinct cases: the truth of a statement was made legally valid by the oath of assurance which appealed to God; an agreement or covenant was made legally binding by the oath of promise, accompanied on solemn occasions by the death of the covenanting victim, which death was really an imprecation of death on him who broke the agreement. Further sanctions, in either case, were impossible. The oath went beyond everything. It was as far as men could go. It still forms the highest and final sanction of the law; and when men's statements are contradicted or their promises questioned, the oath is the ultimate confirmation of both. Some translate contradiction 'dispute,' or 'strife;' 'of every dispute or strife of theirs the oath is an end.' The interpretation given above is the more probable, however, partly because 'contradiction' is the accurate rendering of the word elsewhere (chap. vii. 7), and partly because there is no dispute or strife supposed in this case, but only, on man's side, disbelief and questioning of the Divine announcement. The entire thought of this reasoning is given in very similar words in Philo (see Delitzsch).

Ver. 17. **Wherein**; better, 'wherefore,' under which circumstances, in which case, on which principle, *i.e.* man having this estimate of the value of an oath.—**God, willing to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise** (those to whom under both economies the promises belong, see ver. 12) **the immutability of his will.** The word used for 'will' is used by Luke and by Paul to express God's gracious will or counsel (Acts ii. 23, etc.; Eph. i. 11).—**Intervened,** 'mediated,' **with an oath,** *i.e.* between Himself as the promiser and man as the recipient of the promise. He Himself came as pledge and surety, not for us (Ps. cxix. 122) but for Himself. The same loving purpose that provided the blessings He promised prompted Him to do everything that could be done to win our trust and establish our faith.

Ver. 18. **That by means of two immutable things,** two distinct acts, things really done. Most understand by these two things the promise and the oath to Abraham; but the immutability He is said to *show by the oath* (ver. 17); though no doubt He was also immutable in His promise,

That quality, however, was not so clearly shown to our apprehension. It is therefore better to regard the oath to Abraham as one, and the oath concerning Melchisedec (the typical priest) as another (Ps. cx. 4, quoted in chap. v. 6 and vii. 21).—**In neither of which is it possible that God ever lies** (the force of the tense denying the possibility in a single case). The emphasis is on lying and the impossibility, while the absence of the Greek article before 'God' calls attention to His nature. In the case of Him who is God, lying can really have no place (Tit. i. 2), only He needs to meet human infirmity.—**That we may have strong encouragement who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us** (as the goal of our race or the reward of our conflict). On the whole, this is the more probable meaning. Those who connect 'strong encouragement' with 'to lay hold of the hope,' etc., leave 'have fled for refuge' without an object, and represent Christians as fleeing somewhere for refuge, and then laying hold of their hope. What they need is 'strong encouragement,' having already fled for refuge to their hope. We have laid hold of the promise set before us in the double oath of God, Christ, the Desire of all nations, and the great High Priest, and it is a mighty encouragement to *keep* hold of that on which we have *laid* hold (the word means both), to know that God Himself has solemnly assured and reassured us of His loving purpose on our behalf. 'Encouragement,' translated 'consolation,' has a wide meaning; it includes the help and blessing which men call in for emergencies. The meanings vary between 'strength' and 'consolation,' the old English word 'comfort' representing both—the first etymologically (through *fortis*), and the second from usage.

Ver. 19. **Which** (*i.e.* which hope, not which encouragement) **we have.** The hope spoken of in the previous verse is largely objective, *i.e.* it includes the object of our hope,—the glorious things which the promise warrants us in expecting. In this verse it is largely subjective—the affection or grace (compare 'Christ, our hope, sustains us,' where hope is objective; and 'hope in Christ sustains us,' where hope is subjective; both are combined in the beautiful description, 'Christ in us the hope of glory'). Each implies the other; the heavenly reward as set before us by God is 'our hope' in its objective sense; our hope of the heavenly reward is the grace of hope in the subjective sense.—**As an anchor of the soul** (a common classical emblem, though not found, as 'anchor' itself is never found, in the Old Testament) **both sure** (with firm holding ground) **and stedfast** (in itself strong), **and entering into that which is within the veil.** A mixed figure, but of great beauty. The anchor of the sailor is cast downwards into the depth of the ocean; but the anchor of the Christian, which is hope, finds its ground and hold above. Into the holiest above Jesus has entered for us, and there also the anchor of our hope has entered; so have we rest now, and shall outride all the storms of our earthly life. Some regard these last clauses, 'sure and stedfast,' as qualifying 'hope,' not the anchor; the image, in short, they think, is once named, and then no longer used; while others regard the hope as identical with Christ, who is said to enter heaven as our anchor, and then as priest for us. The general sense is not changed in any of these interpretations. The force and beauty of the figure is best preserved, however, by the interpretation first given.

Ver. 20. **Whither as forerunner Jesus has entered for us, having become after the order of Melchisedec a High Priest for ever.** 'As forerunner' (not 'the,' and not 'a' forerunner, as if He were one of several. This absence of the article simply calls attention to the nature and purpose of His entrance). 'Forerunner' occupies the prominent place also in the sentence. The Levitical high priest entered the Holy of Holies on behalf of the people, as Christ also entered into the Holiest of all. Here He appears in a new character. He is now gone to prepare a place for us; we are to follow and to share His glory and His throne. The 'priest for ever' of the Psalm is now changed into 'high priest,' a title made appropriate by the fact that it is not into the holy place simply, but into the immediate presence of God, He is gone.—**After the order of Melchisedec** occupies the emphatic place in the verse, for it is the subject to which he is about to return. Here, therefore, the digression ends.

CHAP. VII. 1–28. Resuming his argument, the writer proceeds to show that Jesus, belonging as He did to the order of Melchisedec, is superior to Aaron. In proving his point he first (1) treats of the priest king Melchisedec with reference to the history of Genesis (xiv.), dwells upon his greatness (1–3), and on his superiority to Abraham, the ancestor and representative of Levi (4–10); he then (2) treats of the prediction (Ps. cx.), wherein it is foretold that a perpetual priest is to arise who is to supersede the Aaronic priests because of their inefficiency; shows (3) that the greater solemnity of the institution of the priesthood of Christ proves its superiority to the priesthood of Levi (20–22); (4) its permanence (23–25); and (5) its adaptedness to our needs (26–28).

Here begin the things hard to be explained; not that the difficulty lies in the phrases used concerning Melchisedec, for these, however startling to us, were familiar modes of expression among the Jews, but that the Jews were slow to receive and apply the general teaching of the passage. The Jewish priesthood had the highest sanctions; it was the divinest part of the law. The government was originally a theocracy; the priest was the representative of the invisible King, His minister, and the mediator between the nation and Himself. The kingship came later. It originated partly in popular feeling, and was at first even displeasing to God. That the Messiah should be King, the Son of David, and the occupant of his throne, was generally allowed; but that He was to be priest also, that He was to set aside the ancient law, was something more difficult to believe. The cessation of the priesthood is indeed as great a mystery to the Jews as the destruction of the Temple, and is in their view even more irremediable. And yet One is to arise after the order of Melchisedec, and not after that of Aaron, and is to hold uninterrupted office in His Church.

Ver. 1. **For this Melchisedec . . . abideth a priest continually.** And who is he? **King of Salem,** *i.e.* Jerusalem, as is taught in the old tradition given in the Targums (see Gill); and in Josephus (*Antiq.* i. 10, 2), the Salem of the 76th Psalm (ver. 3). The later tradition, though earlier than Jerome's day, that it was a Salem in Samaria (John iii. 23), is not probable. Nor only was he

king of Salem, he was also **Priest of the Most High God**, the possessor of heaven and earth, a title intended to assert not only that He is God alone, but that Melchisedec was priest of the God not of a particular people, but of all nations; his priesthood belonged therefore to the primitive dispensation of religion, the early catholicism of the first ages, and not to the temporary and typical economy of Judaism.—**Who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings**, and gave him, when at the summit of his earthly greatness, after he had overthrown four kings and delivered five, his priestly benediction (see Deut. xxi. 5)—a benediction which Abraham welcomed by paying the tithe which was of old offered to priests, that they might present it as a symbol of the consecration of all the gains of the offerer unto God. Abraham therefore acknowledged what the blessing implied, the reality and the greatness of his priesthood.

Nor less instructive is his name and the name of his city, and the very silence of the Scripture record on other questions. Melchisedec, his personal name, when interpreted, is significant of his character. He is king of Righteousness, he rules in righteousness, he maintains and diffuses righteousness.—**And after that** (in the next place) **he is king of Peace**, and 'righteousness and peace' are, as we know, the glory of the reign of the Messiah (Ps. lxxii.). This reasoning rests upon a double principle. Names are in the Old Testament largely descriptive of character, and as God arranges all the developments of history, and sets up this king as a type of the Messiah, we may safely reason from him to the antitype, and gather lessons and proofs of God's purpose and grace.

Ver. 3. He is **without father or mother**, appearing out of the darkness without ancestors or successors; **without pedigree** either immediate or remote; owing his priesthood, therefore, and dignities to no connection with priests on his father's side or even on his mother's: his is a priesthood purely personal, and not to be traced to natural descent or hereditary claim. In contrast with this tenure of office was the tenure of the Levites; they held their priesthood only on condition that they *could prove* their descent from Levi; and so, after the captivity, those who could not prove this descent were not allowed to act as priests till God Himself gave counsel by Urim and Thummim (Ezra ii. 62, 63; Neh. vii. 63–65). —**Without beginning of days or end of life**, unlike the Jewish priests therefore, who began their ministry at thirty and closed it at fifty, the high priest holding his office until he died.—**But made like** (in the respect named) **unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.** These words still refer to the history and not properly to the Psalm (cx. 4), where it is said that Melchisedec was made like to Christ, and so, instead of **'a priest for ever,'** the phrase of the Psalm, we have **'a priest continually,'** one whose office remains unbroken either at the beginning or at the close. Though this is the simplest and the natural interpretation of the words, some find a deeper meaning in them. The terms used are wide and sweeping, and while the Targums and Philo, and modern commentators, find no difficulty in the explanations given above of the phrases 'without father or mother or genealogy,' a deeper meaning is not without its attractions, especially when the words are applied to the great antitype Christ. 'Without father,' it has been thought, may refer to the fact that Christ had no earthly father and no Divine mother (answering to His higher nature), while the later expressions, 'without beginning of days or end of life,' are descriptive, they think, of Him whose goings-forth are from everlasting, and who, though He died, conquered death, and has taken the nature He assumed into union with His essential eternity. What in the type means no record, meant in the antitype no existence. It may fairly be admitted that the phrases are finely chosen so as to be true of the type in some degree, and more profoundly true of our Lord; but beyond this it is unsafe to go. Origen regarded Melchisedec as the incarnation of an angel; Bleek thinks that the writer shared a supposed Jewish opinion that he was called into existence miraculously and miraculously withdrawn, then abiding a priest for ever. Others, ancient and modern, think he was the Son of God Himself—an opinion untenable, inconsistent alike with the Psalm and with the entire teaching of this Epistle. The Jewish writers supposed him to have been Shem (see Gill), or Enoch, or Job. It is enough to say that he probably represents a royal worshipper of the true God, the head of his race, before as yet the primitive worship had become corrupt, and before there had arisen any need for selecting a particular family as the depositary and the guard of the Divine will. . . . It is solemn and instructive to note how most of the false religions on earth and most of the corruptions of the time owe their power to men's desire to have a human priest who may forgive them and plead for them, and even offer sacrifice for them. The doctrine is even more popular than the opposite extreme, forgiveness without sacrifice and without priest. All sacrifices are superseded by the sacrifice of the cross, and all priesthoods by the priesthood of our Lord. The recognition of one priest is as essential to true religion as the recognition of one king.

Ver. 4. **Now consider** (consider further, a slightly transitional particle) **how great** (applied to age, size, or, as here, to moral grandeur) **this man was, to whom even Abraham the patriarch** (the father of the tribe, of the whole race of Israel) **gave the tenth out of the best of the spoils.** The word rendered 'spoils' means properly that which lies at the top of a heap, 'the finest of the wheat,' and so of any spoils taken in war. It is questioned whether the tenth of the best of the spoil means the tenth of the best of the spoils, leaving what was of less value untithed, or a tenth of all the spoil, which tenth as given to God was to be the best part of the whole. The last is the true meaning (comp. Num. xv. 21), for it is already said that Abraham gave a tenth part of all (ver. 2). As was fitting, he gave to God the tenth, and that tenth the best.

Ver. 5. **And they verily** (or, 'indeed,' as in ver. 8; or better, the emphatic **'and they,'** the Greek particle calling attention to the contrast between those mentioned in this verse and in the following) **that are of the sons of Levi, when they** (not 'who') **receive . . . have a commandment**, etc. The meaning here is best learned from the facts. The Levites, the teachers of the Jewish people, received their portion of the land of promise in the form of a tithe of all the produce of the ground (Num. xviii. 21–24); of this tithe, the priests properly so called received a tithe

(Num. xviii. 26–28): the priests' share, therefore, was taken from their brethren's share, and all from the people. This was the arrangement 'according to the law.'

Ver. 6. **But he** (Melchisedec) **whose descent** (pedigree) **is not reckoned from them has** nevertheless **taken tithes of Abraham** (when he contained in his own person both Levi and Israel). And not only did he receive tithes from the tithe-taking Levites, **he hath also blessed him who has** (who is the possessor of) **the promises.**

Ver. 7. **And beyond all contradiction** (or without any contradiction), what gives a blessing is greater, (is raised above) what receives it. The neuter of the original seems used to express the universality of the statement, and to make the truth of it depend not on the person but on the act or relation itself; and the conclusion is that Melchisedec is greater than Abraham, the possessor of the promises, for he adds even to the blessings of him who for all men and by all men is so richly blessed. The exalted founder and head of the covenant people is inferior, even in the hour of his triumph, to the still more exalted and mysterious personage who is at once priest and king.

Ver. 8. **And here indeed** (as in ver. 5, 'indeed' is useful only to make more clear the contrast of the following clause; an emphatic '**and here**' would be better) refers not to the time of Melchisedec, though that is last spoken of, but to the time of the Levitical priesthood, which extends down to the writer's own age.—**Men that die** (literally, 'dying men' they are who) **receive tithes**; **but there** (*i.e.* in the case of Melchisedec of which he is immediately speaking, but which as belonging to the past is more remote) **he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth,** *i.e.* we read of him not as dying but as living. No 'end of life' is affirmed of him at all. This is spoken not of Melchisedec as man, but of the Melchisedec of the sacred narrative, who is made in this way like unto the eternal priest. As man he no doubt died, but as priest he did not belong to that order. Under the law the priesthood was temporary. Before the law the priest was priest as long as he lived, and so was perpetual (as at Rome the dictator for life was known as 'Dictator perpetuus'); and as Christ lives for ever, so for ever He is able to make intercession for us.

Ver. 9. **And so to say** (a phrase which, like 'as it were,' is used to moderate a strong expression or to qualify a statement that is not literally true; the other sense of the original, 'in a word,' 'to speak briefly,' is not appropriate here).

An obvious objection to the previous reasoning is that Abraham was not a priest. It was therefore not unnatural that he should pay tithes and receive the blessing. But the objection is answered by the fact that as Abraham had obtained the promise, he was the representative of all his descendants. Levi was in him, not physically and seminally merely, but representatively; and so Abraham on his own behalf and on theirs recognised a priesthood beyond the limits of the dispensation which belonged to his own line.

Ver. 11. **If therefore perfection was**; better, 'If again,' or 'Now if,' a transitional particle indicating an argument bearing on the same subject (see ix. 1). 'Was,' not 'were;' the reasoning is not, 'If there were perfection, there would be no need;' but, 'If there was perfection, there was no need.' The Psalm tells us that in the person of the Messiah there was to arise a priest who did not belong to the order of Aaron, but to a different order; and this declaration implies that the priesthood of Aaron was not capable of securing the great end of a priesthood. What that end is has been largely discussed. Expiation, consecration, transformation of personal character, true permanent blessedness, each has had its advocates, and we may safely combine them all. If sinners are to be forgiven, forgiveness must be consistent with the Divine character and law; the conscience must be pacified and man made holy. That the Levitical priesthood did not effect these ends is proved at length later on; here the writer restricts himself to the one point, that after the first priesthood was instituted it was announced that its work was to pass into the hands of another order, an intimation of its insufficiency. The case is made clear by the parenthetic statement—**for on the ground** of the Levitical **priesthood** (not 'under it') **the people have received the law** (*i.e.* not that the priesthood was first and the law afterwards, for the contrary is the fact, nor that the people were subject to a law that had reference to the priesthood). The law rested on the assumed existence of a 'priesthood, all its precepts and requirements presupposing some such body;' so that now, if the priesthood is removed, the economy itself is removed also. Under the Gospel, God appoints, as He foretold, a priest who does not answer to the description given of priests under the law—a clear proof that He who first made the law has annulled it.—**What need was there that there should arise** (the usual word to describe one raised to dignities in his office, Acts iii. 22, vii. 37) **a different priest after the order of Melchisedec, and that he should be said to be not** (or not be called) **after the order of Aaron?**

Ver. 12. **For the priesthood being changed.** This is true of an institution that forms the foundation of the law in the sense just described (ver. 11). If Christ is made priest, the law is changed in its ceremonial and political arrangements, and even in the ethical relation of the people to God. They have another priest, and through the completeness of his work they have a freeness of access and a fulness of forgiveness which alters the very nature of their economy.

Ver. 13. The writer now proves the completeness of the change of the priesthood.—**For he of whom** (not 'to whom,' Dr. J. Brown and others, the preposition being used to denote that to which a word or thing refers) **these things** (the words in Psalm cx.) **are said** (see the end of ver. 11) **hath partaken of** (better than 'pertaineth'), hath become a member of, **a different tribe** (the words describe an already existing fact, and intimate that he had joined the tribe), **of which tribe no man hath ever** (the full force of the corrected text) **given attendance** (the word means to bestow labour or attention upon anything, see 1 Tim. iv. 13) **at the altar.**

Ver. 14. **For** (the proof of the statement of ver. 13) **it is evident** (plain to all, an adjective found only in Paul, 1 Tim. v. 24; for proof that it is evident, see the passages in the margin above) **that our Lord hath sprung**—as a *branch* out of the root of Jesse, a common rendering of the Hebrew word, Jer. xxiii. 5, Zech. iv. 2; or

as the sun or the star rises (Num. xxii. 17; compare Isa. lx. 1 and Matt. iv. 2). Both meanings of the word 'hath sprung' are scriptural. Christ is said to 'spring up' in both senses. Here the former is the more probable, as the language of Isaiah, chap. xi., seems to have been in the mind of the writer.—**Out of Judah, with respect to which Moses spake nothing concerning priests,** nothing to imply that priests should arise out of that tribe.—**Our Lord.** This is the only place in Scripture where this name 'Our Lord,' now so familiar, is applied to Christ without the addition of His proper name Jesus, or His official name Christ. 'The Lord' is frequent.

Vers. 15–17. The writer now touches another point of the argument.—**And it is yet far more evident.** What is more evident? That the law is changed? as De Wette and Bleek hold. Hardly; for this is not the main thought, but the imperfection of the priesthood (ver. 11). That imperfection has been proved by the change of priests, and that imperfection is made still more evident by the fact that a new priesthood is to arise **after the similitude of Melchisedec** (ver. 16), **who hath been made** (who hath become) priest **not after what is a law of a carnal commandment**—*i.e.* a rule of external ordinances (see Lev. xxi. 17–24; Ex. xl. 12–17), temporary and perishing—**but after what is the power** (the priestly and kingly power, Rom. i.) **of an endless, an indissoluble life.** We are bidden to conceive of His priesthood in this light, and not in the light of the qualities and temporary office of the priests under the Levitical law (ver. 17).—**For it is testified of him, Thou art a priest for ever,** the emphatic phrase.

Vers. 18, 19. These verses summarize the argument of the previous verses.—**For what takes place is on the one hand an annulling of the former commandment** (concerning the priesthood) **on account of what in it was weak and unprofitable (for the law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand** [there is] **a bringing in over the law of a better hope**—such a bringing in as supplies the deficiencies of the law and practically supersedes it.—**By means of which hope we draw nigh to God.** 'What in it was weak' is the expression the writer employs, not the wider expression, **the weakness thereof.** He simply calls attention to what in it has that quality. The law made nothing perfect; it finished nothing; it created hope, but failed to satisfy it; it awakened a consciousness of the need of an atonement, but provided no sacrifice; it set up the ideal of a holy life, but failed to give the strength needed to realize the ideal; it created longings for closer fellowship with God, but opened no way whereby we could draw nigh. '*We* draw nigh,' and not priests only. The access to God is free to all who believe. The Holy of Holies has still to the eye of flesh its veil; but Christ has entered for us, and so to the eye of faith it has no veil at all. The title and the fitness to enter there is the perfection which the law could never give. This note has been struck already (iv. 16, vi. 19); by and by it swells into a whole strain of impassioned argument (ix. 24, x. 19–25).

Vers. 20–22. A third argument is now introduced. The oath which God sware in making His Son Priest gives to His office higher sanctions. —**And inasmuch as** (it is) **not without an oath;** rather a simpler filling up of the omission than the Authorised Version, though 'He was made (or came to be) priest' better represents what is really a new argument.

Ver. 21. (**For they, as we know, without an oath** (literally, without the swearing of an oath as a solemn act) **are made** (have become and now are) **priests; but he with an oath by him that saith,** etc.).—22. **Of so much better a covenant** (or as in A. V., provided 'a better covenant,' which comes at the end of the verse, is made emphatic) **hath Jesus become surety,** *i.e.* He has pledged Himself for the maintenance of it, and for the fulfilment of its promises. The covenant is the result of His death, and His presence above as Priest (vi. 20) and the glory and honour with which He is crowned (ii. 9) are a perpetual security for its continuance and completion.

Vers. 23–25. A fourth argument for the superiority of Christ's priesthood is that the priests under the law were continually removed by death, while Christ is undying. This argument has been touched upon before (vers. 8 and 16) in different connections. Here it is the personal contrast of the many who changed with the one who abides.—**And they indeed have become and still are priests in great number, because they are being hindered by death from continuing** (*i.e.* 'in their priesthood,' not 'in their life,' which makes a poor tautological sense).

Ver. 24. **But he because of his abiding for ever** (*i.e.* in His life, John xii. 34) **hath his priesthood unchangeable** ('inviolable'). The active sense of the word rendered 'unchangeable' ('what does not pass over to another') is very unusual, and therefore less likely; but either meaning makes a good, and nearly the same, sense. By some commentators the 'abiding' which is here affirmed of Christ is applied not to His life, but to His priesthood. If this meaning seem preferable, it needs then to be kept in mind that the 'for ever' of the Psalm relates to the priesthood of Christ, and answers to the 'for ever' of the arrangement with Melchisedec—each of them having reference to the covenant to which they belong, and so not eternal in the case of Melchisedec, nor even in the case of Christ; for though the life of Christ is eternal, as are the effects of His priesthood, yet His exercise of that office will cease when all the glorious ends of it are completely answered in the eternal salvation of the redeemed, even as He will then deliver up the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. xv. 24). But the more natural reference of 'for ever' is to His life.

Ver. 25. **Whence,** *i.e.* from the fact that He lives it follows—the particle being generally used to introduce something of deeper significance.—**He is able also to save** (in its completest sense, not from this evil or the other, but from all evil) **to the uttermost** (not to save for ever, but, as the word properly means (see Bleek), to completeness in every respect, and not chiefly with respect to duration) **all that approach through him to God, ever living as he does,**—a fuller explanation of the 'whence' at the beginning of the verse,—**to undertake for them.** The word rendered 'undertake' means primarily 'to see' or 'meet in with a person on behalf of another,' and so includes all that Christ does for us, either by His perpetual oblation in heaven, or by His mediation generally and kingship as Head over all. This

mediation is of the very essence of the work of Christ so far as His priestly office is concerned, and is the ground of the triumphant outburst of St. Paul when he concludes that none can condemn, seeing that Christ who died is now risen, and is making continual intercession on our behalf. Its foundation of right is His atoning sacrifice; its central motive is the love He bears us; its method of procedure, the advocacy of our interests, and the intimation of His will that the blessings we need be bestowed; and its fruit the maintenance of our relation to God, and our perseverance in holiness.

Vers. 26–28. The final argument for this superiority is the moral fitness of the whole arrangement (see ii. 10).—**For such a high priest was for us befitting**—a high priest **who was holy** (giving to God the reverence and holy love that were due to Him), **harmless** (innocent, guileless, unsuspected in relation to all human duty between man and man), **undefiled** (free, therefore, from personal pollution, and from legal defilement, such as often interrupted the priestly office), **separated from sinners**—pitying them, helping them, able to sympathize with them, dying for them, but not belonging to their class,—apart from them as He was *apart* from sin itself (Heb. iv. 15, where a form of the same word is used), **and made higher than the heavens**—a phrase found only here, though the sense is expressed elsewhere (chap. iv. 14: 'having passed through the heavens;' Eph. iv. 10: 'far above the heavens'). It describes His higher authority, while implying that part of His work has been done on earth, and that for the rest it is essential that He should be at the right hand of God. And such a high priest and no other became us, **who needs not daily to offer sacrifice for his own sins**, as the high priest did on the Day of Atonement, **and then for the sins of the people; but this** (the offering for the sins of the people) **he did once for all when he offered himself.** This is the first mention in this Epistle of Christ 'offering Himself;' the truth is introduced again and again: once struck, the note sounds ever louder and louder. As the writer compares Christ with the Levitical high priests, and as these did not offer sacrifices daily, there has been much discussion on the 'daily' of this verse. The various solutions (that the high priest did offer *incense* daily: that the high priest might have taken part occasionally in the daily burnt-offerings; that 'daily' means on the day appointed—the Day of Atonement which is elsewhere said to be every year 'from days to days,' Ex. xiii. 10, Heb. and LXX.; and that the high priest is regarded as doing what the ordinary priest did) are all unsatisfactory. Christ is now, and every day, in the Holy Place. If, therefore, He were a sinner, as the high priests of old were, He would need to offer for Himself each day, as the high priests offer, on the one day of every year when they appeared before God. But Christ, being completely free from all personal sin, had no need to offer except for others; and as He offered Himself once for all, His atonement has perpetual efficacy.

Ver. 28. **For the law appointed men** (emphatic) **high priests having infirmity; but the word of the oath** (see ver. 21) **which was after the law**—five hundred years later as given in prophecy, and one thousand five hundred later still when fulfilled in Christ—[appointeth] **one who is Son** (see note on i. 1), **made perfect for evermore.** 'For evermore' is in the emphatic place, and belongs to 'made perfect.' 'Having infirmity' belongs to 'high priests;' they were mortal, sinful men, and therefore were an inefficient priesthood; their expiations, their intercessions, their benedictions, all had the character of weakness, and as such they were not fit to meet our needs. 'Perfected' or 'made perfect' (not 'consecrated') 'for evermore;' it is the same word as is used in chap. ii. 10, 'made perfect through suffering;' and in v. 9, 'having been made perfect;' and this condition is continuous and unchanging, forming a contrast to the condition of the priests of the **Law.**

CHAPTER VIII. 1–X. 18.

The Excellency of the Christian Dispensation proved by the Superiority of the New Covenant—in the Efficacy of its Priest and Sacrifice, viii. 1–13, *and in its Worship and Ordinances*, ix. 1–x. 18.

1 NOW of[1] the things which we have spoken[2] *this is* the sum:[3] we have such an high [a]priest, [b]who is set on
2 the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of [c]the sanctuary, and of [d]the true tabernacle, which
3 the Lord pitched, [e]and[4] not man. For [f]every high priest is ordained[5] to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore [g]*it is* of
4 necessity that this man have somewhat also[6] to offer. For[7] if he were on earth, he should not be a priest,[8] seeing that there

[a] Ps. cx. (cix.) 1.
[b] Eph. i. 20; Col. iii. 1; ch. i. 3, x. 12, xii. 2.
[c] Ch. ix. 8, xiii. 24.
[d] Ch. ix. 11.
[e] Num. xxiv. 6, Gr.
[f] Ch. v. 1.
[g] Eph. v. 2; ch ix. 14.

[1] *Gr.* upon
[2] are saying (*lit.* are being said)
[3] the chief
[4] *omit* and
[5] appointed
[6] *rather*, high priest . . . also
[7] *reaa*, Now also
[8] would not even be a priest

5 are priests[9] that offer gifts[10] according to the law: who serve
unto the example and [h] shadow of[11] heavenly things, as Moses [h] Col. ii. 17; ch. ix. 23, x. 1.
was[12] admonished of God when he was about to make[13] the
tabernacle: [i] for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things [i] Ex. xxv. 40, xxvi. 30, xxvii. 8; Num. viii. 4; Acts vii. 44.
6 according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount. But
now [k] hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how [k] 2 Cor. iii. 6, 8, 9; ch. vii. 22.
much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was
7 established[14] upon better promises. [l] For if that first *covenant* [l] Ch. vii. 11, 18.
had been faultless, then should[15] no place have been sought for
8 the second. For finding fault with them, he saith,

[m] Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, [m] Jer. xxxi. (xxxviii.) 31, 34.
When I will make[16] a new covenant with[17] the house of
Israel and with[17] the house of Judah:
9 Not according to the covenant that I made [n] with[18] their [n] Jer. xxxiv (xli.) 8.
fathers
In the day when I took them by the hand to lead them
out of the land of Egypt;
Because they continued not in my covenant,
And I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with[19] the house
of Israel
After those days, saith the Lord;
I will put my laws into their mind,
And write them in[20] their hearts:
And [o] I will be to them a God, [o] Zech. viii. 8.
And they shall be to me a people:
11 And [p] they shall not teach every man his neighbour,[21] [p] Isa. liv. 13; Jo. vi. 45; 1 Jo. ii. 27.
And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:
For all shall know me,
From the least[22] to the greatest.
12 For I will be merciful[23] to their unrighteousness,[24]
[q] And their sins and their iniquities[25] will I remember no more. [q] Rom. xi. 27; ch. x. 17.
13 [r] In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. [r] 2 Cor. v. 17.
Now that which decayeth and waxeth old[26] *is* ready to vanish
away.[27]

CHAP. IX. 1. Then verily the first *covenant*[28] had also ordinances
2 of divine service, and [s] a worldly sanctuary.[29] [t] For there was [s] Ex. xxv. 8. [t] Ex. xxvi. 1. [u] Ex. xxvi. 35, xl. 4. [v] Ex. xxv. 31.
a tabernacle made;[30] the first, [u] wherein *was*[31] [v] the candle-

[9] *omit* priests [10] the gifts [11] what is a copy and shadow of the
[12] is [13] *Gr.* finish [14] hath been enacted (as a law, *see* viii. 11)
[15] would [16] *Gr.* complete [17] towards (with the idea of bringing home upon)
[18] for [19] covenant with, *or*, establish for [20] also upon
[21] *read*, townsman [22] *insert*, of them even [23] *Gr.* propitious
[24] unrighteousnesses [25] *probably omit* and their iniquities
[26] is becoming old and failing for age [27] *Gr.* is nigh to vanishing away
[28] *rather*, Now the first covenant indeed
[29] its sanctuary (*or*, holy place) of this world
[30] *rather*, prepared [31] *rather*, is (*see ver.* 4)

stick, and [w] the table, and the shewbread; [32] which is called the
3 sanctuary.[33] [x] And after the second veil, the tabernacle which
4 is called the Holiest of all; [34] which had the [35] golden censer, and
[y] the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold,
wherein *was* [z] the golden pot that had manna, [36] and [a] Aaron's
5 rod that budded, and [b] the tables of the covenant; and [c] over
it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; [37] of which
6 we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things
were thus ordained, [38] [d] the priests went [39] always into the first
7 tabernacle, accomplishing the service *of God;* but into the
second *went* [40] the high priest alone [e] once every year, not with-
out blood, [f] which he offered [41] for himself, and *for* the errors [42]
8 of the people: [g] the Holy Ghost this signifying, that [h] the way
into the holiest of all [43] was not yet [44] made manifest, while as
9 the first tabernacle was [45] yet standing: which *was* [46] a figure for
the time then [46] present, in which were [47] offered both gifts and
sacrifices, [i] that could not make him that did the service perfect,
10 as pertaining to the conscience; [48] *which stood* only in [k] meats
and drinks, and [l] divers washings, [m] and carnal ordinances, [49]
11 imposed *on them* until the time of reformation. But Christ
being come [50] [n] an high priest [o] of good things to come, [p] by a [51]
greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that
12 is to say, not of this building; [52] neither [q] by [53] the blood of
goats and calves, but [r] by [53] his own blood he entered in [s] once [54]
into the holy place, [t] having obtained eternal redemption *for us.*
13 For if [u] the blood of bulls and of goats, and [v] the ashes of an
heifer sprinkling the unclean, [55] sanctifieth to the purifying [56] of
14 the flesh: how much more [w] shall the blood of Christ, [x] who
through the eternal Spirit [y] offered himself without spot to God,
[z] purge [57] your [58] conscience from [a] dead works [b] to serve the
15 living God? [c] And for this cause [d] he is the mediator of the
new testament, [59] [e] that by means of death, [60] for the redemption
of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, [61] [f] they
which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.
16 For where a testament [61] *is*, there must also of necessity be the

[32] *lit.* the presenting of the loaves, *or*, the loaves as presented
[33] the Holy place (*see ver.* 3) [34] *Gr.* the Holy of holies [35] having a
[36] a golden pot having the manna [37] *Gr.* the propitiatory
[38] prepared (*ver.* 2) [39] go in [40] *omit* went, *or*, goes in
[41] offereth [42] *Gr.* ignorances [43] *rather*, the holy place (*see vers.* 12, 25)
[44] hath not been [45] is [46] *or*, now [47] *read*, according to which [figure] are
[48] that cannot, as to the conscience, perfect him that does the service
[49] *read*, being only (in the meats and drinks and divers washings, *Gr.* baptisms) carnal ordinances [50] having come [51] *or*, through the
[52] creation [53] through [54] once for all
[55] *lit.* them that have become unclean, *or*, have been defiled [56] purity
[57] purify [58] *Some MSS. read*, our [59] a new covenant
[60] *Gr.* a death having taken place—with the idea of the result that follows—(*and so*, the origin *or* means) [61] *or*, covenant

[w] Ex. xxv. 23, 30; Lev. xxiv. 5, 6.
[x] Ex. xxvi. 31, 33, xl. 3, 21; ch. vi. 19.
[y] Ex. xxv. 10, xxvi. 33, xl. 3, 21.
[z] Ex. xvi 33, 34.
[a] Num. xvii. 10.
[b] Ex. xxv. 16, 21, xxxiv 29, xl. 20; Deut. x. 2, 5; 1 Kings viii. 9, 21; 2 Chron. v. 10.
[c] Ex. xxv. 18, 22; Lev. xvi. 2; 1 Kings viii. 6, 7.
[d] Num. xxviii. 3; Dan. viii. 11.
[e] Ver. 25; Ex. xxx. 10; Lev. xvi. 2, 11, 12, 15, 34.
[f] Ch. v. 3, vii. 27.
[g] Ch. x. 19, 20.
[h] Jo. xiv. 6.
[i] Gal. iii. 21; ch. vii 18, 19, x. 1, 11.
[k] Lev. xi. 2; Col. ii. 16.
[l] Num. xix. 7, etc.
[m] Eph. ii. 15; Col. ii. 20; ch. vii. 16.
[n] Ch. iii. 1.
[o] Ch. x. 1.
[p] Ch. viii. 2.
[q] Ch. x. 4.
[r] Acts xx. 28; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19; Rev. i. 5, v. 9.
[s] Vers. 26, 28; Zech. iii. 9; ch. x. 10.
[t] Dan. ix. 24.
[u] Lev. xvi. 14, 16.
[v] Num. xix. 2, 17, etc.
[w] 1 Pet. i. 19; 1 Jo. i. 7; Rev. i. 5.
[x] Rom. i. 4; 1 Pet. iii. 18
[y] Eph. v. 2; Tit. ii 14; ch. vii. 27.
[z] Ch. i. 3, x. 22.
[a] Ch. vi. 1
[b] Lu. i. 74; Rom. vi. 13 22; 1 Pet. iv. 2.
[c] 1 Tim. ii. 5.
[d] Ch. vii. 22, viii. 6, xii. 24
[e] Rom. iii 25, v. 6; 1 Pe.. iii. 18.
[f] Ch. iii. 1.

17 death of the testator.[62] For [e] a testament[61] *is* of force after men
are dead:[63] otherwise it is of no strength at all while the
18 testator[62] liveth. [h] Whereupon neither the first *testament*[61] was
19 dedicated[64] without blood. For when Moses had spoken every
precept[65] to all the people according to the law, [i] he took the
blood of calves and of goats, [k] with water, and scarlet wool, and
20 hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying,
[l] This *is* the blood of the testament[61] which God hath enjoined
21 unto[66] you. Moreover [m] he sprinkled with[67] blood both[68] the
22 tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all
things are by the law purged[69] with blood; and [n] without
23 shedding of blood is no remission. *It was* therefore necessary
that [o] the patterns of things[70] in the heavens should be purified
with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better
24 sacrifices than these. For [p] Christ is not entered[71] into the
holy places[72] made with hands, *which are* the figures of[73] [q] the
true; but into heaven itself, now [r] to appear in the presence of
25 God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as [s] the
high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood
26 of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foun-
dation of the world: but now [t] once [u] in the end of the world
hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
27 [v] And as it is appointed unto[74] men once to die, [w] but after this
28 the judgment: so [x] Christ was once [y] offered to bear the sins
[z] of many; and unto them that [a] look for him shall he appear
the second time without[75] sin unto salvation.

CHAP. X. 1. For the law having [b] a shadow [c] of[76] good things to
come, *and* not the very image of the things, [d] can[77] never with
those[78] sacrifices which they offered year by year continually
2 make the comers thereunto [e] perfect. For then[79] would they
not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers
once purged should[80] have had no more conscience of sins.
3 [f] But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of
4 sins every year. For [g] *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls
5 and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he
cometh into the world, he saith,

> [h] Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,
> But a body hast[81] thou prepared me:[82]

[e] Gal. iii. 15.
[h] Ex. xxiv. 6, etc.
[i] Ex. xxiv. 5, 6, 8; Lev. xvi. 14, 15, 18.
[k] Lev. xiv. 4, 6, 7, 49, 51, 52.
[l] Ex. xxiv. 8; Mat. xxvi. 28.
[m] Ex. xxix 12, 36; Lev. viii. 15, 19, xvi. 14, 15, 16, 18, 19.
[n] Lev. xvii. 11.
[o] Ch. viii. 5.
[p] Ch. vi. 20.
[q] Ch. viii. 2.
[r] Rom. viii. 34; ch. vii. 25; 1 Jo. ii. 1.
[s] Ver. 7.
[t] Ver. 12; ch. vii. 27, x. 10; 1 Pet. iii. 18.
[u] 1 Cor. x. 11; Gal. iv. 4; Eph. i. 10.
[v] Gen. iii. 19; Eccles. iii. 20.
[w] 2 Cor. v. 10; Rev. xx. 12, 13.
[x] Rom. vi. 10; 1 Pet. iii. 18.
[y] 1 Pet. ii. 24; 1 Jo. iii. 5.
[z] Isa. liii. 12; Mat. xxvi. 28; Rom. v. 15.
[a] Tit. ii. 13; 2 Pet. iii. 12.
[b] Col. ii. 17; ch. viii. 5, ix. 23.
[c] Ch. ix. 11.
[d] Ch. ix. 9.
[e] Ver. 14.
[f] Lev. xvi. 21; ch. ix. 7.
[g] Ver. 11; Mic. vi. 6, 7 ch. ix. 13.
[h] Ps. xl. (xxxix.) 6-8 (7-9), L. 8, etc.; Isa. i. 11; Jer. vi. 20; Amos v. 21, 22.

[62] him (*or*, he *in v.* 17) that made it (*see note on verse*), *or*, the covenanting victim
[63] over the dead
[64] Whence not even the first covenant hath been inaugurated
[65] commandment [66] commanded [67] *insert* the [68] *omit* both
[69] purified [70] figures of the things [71] entered not
[72] a holy place, *or*, holy places [73] copies like in pattern to
[74] *Gr.* laid up for [75] *Gr.* apart from [76] *insert* the [77] *read*, they
[78] the same [79] else [80] having been once purified would
[81] didst [82] complete, *or*, fit—for me

6 In[83] burnt-offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had[84]
no pleasure.
7 Then said I, Lo, I come
(In the volume of the book it is written of me,)
To do thy will, O God.
8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and[83] burnt-offerings
and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure
9 *therein;* which[85] are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I
come to do thy will, O God: he taketh away the first, that he
10 may establish the second. [i] By the which will we are[86] sancti- [i] Jo. xvii. 19; ch. xiii. 12.
fied [k] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for [k] Ch. ix. 12.
11 all. And every priest standeth [l] daily ministering and offering [l] Num. xxviii. 3; ch. vii. 27.
oftentimes the same sacrifices, [m] which can never take away [m] Ver. 4.
12 sins: [n] But this man,[87] after he had offered one sacrifice for sins [n] Ps. cx. (cix.) 4; Col. iii. 1; ch. i. 3.
13 for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth
14 expecting [o] till his enemies be made his footstool.[88] For by one [o] Ps. cx. 1; Acts ii. 35; 1 Cor. xv. 25; ch. i. 13.
offering [p] he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.[89] [p] Ver. 1.
15 *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that
he had said before,[90]
16 [q] This *is* the covenant that I will make with them [q] Jer. xxxi. (xxxviii.) 33, 34; ch. viii. 10–12.
After those days, saith the Lord,
I will put my laws into[91] their hearts,
And in[91] their minds will I write them;
17 And[92] their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.
18 Now where remission of these *is*, *there is* no more offering for
sin.

[83] *insert* whole [84] hadst [85] the which
[86] have been [87] he [88] *Gr.* the footstool of his feet
[89] *or*, being sanctified [90] *omit* before [91] on
[92] *rather as implied in* after *of ver.* 15, then saith he (*so some copies read*)

CHAP. VIII.–X. 18. Not only is Christ greater than Aaron, but His functions, and the place where He fulfils them, and His very posture there, are all superior to those of the priests under the Law. Jesus ministers permanently as Priest in the real ('the true') and heavenly temple (viii. 1–5), as Mediator of the new covenant, which is better because it is a spiritual covenant and is based upon better promises (vi. 13). Divine and orderly as were the tabernacle and its services (ix. 1–5), it belonged to an earthly state (see ver. 11), and had no power to give peace to the conscience, nor did it secure access to God (vi. 10); while Christ, by the offering of Himself, has done both (11, 12), ratifying the new covenant by His death (15–17) as the old was ratified by the blood of its victims (18–22), and effectually opening the way into heaven: His sacrifice being offered once for all (23–28), a sacrifice that cannot be repeated being therein in contrast to the offerings of the Law (x. 1–4); a complete fulfilment of the Divine will (5–10), followed by an exaltation never to be abrogated (11–14), and by the removal of all sin (15–18).

CHAP. VIII. 1. **Now**—a transitional particle—**in regard to** (or in) **the things here spoken of** (literally being spoken of), **the chief point is this:** 'The *sum* is this' is a possible meaning of the word; but it does not agree with the force of the preposition, with the incomplete tense of the verb, or with what follows where it is implied that the previous enumeration is unfinished: **We have such a high priest who** (having finished His work) **took his seat on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.** The main point is that Christ, being exalted to the throne of God, and seated there, has an equally exalted sphere for His priestly office, with greater power than the priests of the Law.

Ver. 2. **A minister** (the regular word for public work, and specially for priestly functions, Jer. xxxiii. 21) **of the sanctuary** (the inner part—'the holy of holies,' as it is called in ix. 3; though elsewhere, as here, the holy place or the sanctuary simply, ix. 25, xiii. 11) **and of the true tabernacle** (the outer part of the same erection, called in ix. 2 the first tabernacle) **which the Lord pitched, not man.** Christ's place and

work are described in terms taken from the divisions of the earthly copy of the spiritual or heavenly reality. The copy Moses pitched (Ex. xxxiii. 7); the reality is the work of God Himself. The holy place is the immediate presence of God, distinguished from the tabernacle, where God is pleased to meet with men. Jesus Christ mediates for us in both—in the holy of holies of the Divine nature, while He welcomes and overshadows with His glorified humanity the whole company of the worshippers. Both are in the heavens, and in this double sphere Christ is acting as Priest and High Priest. And yet the spheres are really one. The veil having been removed by His incarnation and death, we all have free access to God. The Father Himself loveth us and gives us the right of entrance (Rom. v. 2), because we have believed in the Son. . . . 'A minister of holy things' (not of the holy places or place) is Luther's rendering; but it is not sanctioned by the usage of this Epistle, where the expression is applied only to the holy place, ix. 25, x. 19, xiii. 11. The same form (the neuter pl.), 'the holies,' is clearly used of 'the holy of holies' in ix. 8, 12. In ix. 3 the holy of holies (probably a superlative, the most holy place) is also used for the inner sanctuary.

Vers. 3–6. **For**—a new proof is now given that Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary. There is no priest without sacrificial functions (ver. 3); and if Christ were here on earth He would not be a priest at all (ver. 4), **there being already those who offer the gifts** and do temple service for what **is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.** Christ's office, therefore, must be discharged elsewhere, as it really is. And the dignity of His office is measured by the superiority of the covenant to which He belongs. The following verbal explanations are important.

Ver. 3. 'Ordained' is simply appointed. 'This man' is rather this high priest. Ver. 4. 'For' is by reading 'now,' and marks the continuance of the statement, not a reason. Ver. 5. 'Who' means 'those namely who,' and calls attention to the description. Ver. 5. 'Serve' describes always in N. T. the service of God. It occurs in Luke eight times, in St. Paul's acknowledged Epistles four times, and this Epistle six times. 'What is a copy;' the word means either a model, the archetype which is to be followed (iv. 11), or it is (as here and in ix. 23) an after-copy made from an original: And 'shadow' of the heavenly things: the shadow cast by a solid body or a mere outline that gives an idea of the form only without revealing the true substance. This language is clearly depreciatory, not because the writer questions the Divine origin of the things he speaks of, but because the true priest having come, the glory of the legal priesthood and of the tabernacle sinks to its proper level as the mere shadow or outline of the great reality.

That this is its true character is now proved from Exodus, **Even as Moses is admonished** of God (not *was*, the present tense shows that the admonition still stands in Scripture and may be used to explain the nature of the tabernacle), **when about to make** (literally, to finish, *i.e.* to take in hand and complete) **the tabernacle, for** (not part of the quotation, but a proof of the assertion just made), **see, saith he . . . the pattern showed to thee in the mount.** These words may mean either the reality, the veritable heavenly things which are the original of the earthly resemblances, or a plan of the tabernacle itself which had the spiritual meaning here given to them. As Moses, however, could hardly have seen Christ's priesthood and offering as actual facts, it must have been the symbolical, the parabolical (ix. 9) representation of them in the form of the earthly tabernacle. Anyhow, the priesthood and offering of Christ belong to the heavenly state.

Ver. 6. **But now**—as the case is; not the temporal now, but the logical now so common in this Epistle, ix. 26, xi. 16, xi. 8, xii. 26, and in Paul's writings—**hath he obtained a more excellent ministry** (see ver. 2); **by how much he is the mediator of a better covenant also.** Jesus is surety (vii. 22) and mediator, both; and herein He has qualities which Aaron never had. He is Moses and Aaron (Mediator and Priest), and the ratifying, the sealing blood of the victim all in one. —**Which** (*i.e.* better in this that it) **was a law-based constitution**, like the first, but resting **upon better promises**, as the following quotations prove. 'A law-based and a law-enacted constitution' (as the Greek implies) is the very character Paul gives to the Gospel. It is 'the law of faith,' 'the law of spiritual life in Jesus Christ,' 'the law of righteousness,' Rom. iii. 27, viii. 2, ix. 31.

Ver. 7. **For** . . . the better promises implied in what follows are themselves a proof of the inferiority of the old covenant—**no place would have been sought**, *i.e.* in the development of the Divine purpose, in the plan of redemption.

Ver. 8. Yet it is sought—**For** (and this is the proof) **finding fault with them.** This phrase completes the description of the previous verse. *There*, the *covenant* is said to be not blameless; and here, it is the people who are blamed. The covenant, as a revelation of God's holiness, was faultless; but as the people fell away under it, it failed as a covenant of works to establish abiding fellowship between them and God, and so proved weak and profitless (vii. 22, see on vii. 19).—**He saith: Behold, the days come**—Jeremiah's common introduction to his prophecies (Jer. ix. 25, xvi. 24, etc.). The prediction that follows is taken from the last great series of his prophecies (chaps. xxx. xxxi.), which are distinctly Messianic. It points to the new covenant which God will one day make with His people, based upon the absolute remission of sins and on a no less absolute change of heart.—**When I will make**; rather, will complete. The word here used is not the same as in ver. 9, which is rightly 'made,' nor yet as in ver. 10, where the word means establish a 'covenant.' It may be added, however, that the three different Greek verbs used here are taken from the LXX., and that all represent one and the same Hebrew verb. Nor is the 'with' of vers. 9, 10 the same expression in the Greek. In both verses the 'house of Israel' and 'their fathers' are rather recipients than co-ordinate agents. The covenant is 'for' them rather than with them, though in a sense it was both and is so described.

Ver. 9. The old covenant differs from the new in this—that it was broken on the one side, and ended in indifference and displeasure on the other. Perfect as the Law was, the Jews never kept it. Idolatry prevailed in nearly all the earlier ages of the theocracy, as later hypocrisy and formalism prevailed; and so God withdrew the providential favour He had promised to show them, though only that in the end he might introduce an

economy of richer grace; whether with a correspondent change upon the part of the ancient people of God remains, the Epistle tells us, yet to be seen.

Ver. 10. The new differs also from the old in this, that—(*a*) God will write His law upon their **hearts**; (*b*) they shall be permanently His people, and He will be their God (ver. 11); (*c*) the true knowledge of God, moreover, will become the common heritage of all the members of the polity He is about to establish (ver. 12); and fourthly, (*d*) a more excellent promise, itself the beginning and the very reason (for) of the rest; **God will forgive** (will be propitious to them, and to) **their unrighteousness and their sins and their lawlessness will he remember no more.** Sins of every kind He will forgive—at once and for ever. How completely this teaching agrees with Paul's need not be shown. In Christ all is forgiven when once men believe, and yet the doctrine is not the minister of sin, for the faith that justifies is ever the beginning of renewal, the germ of a holy life.

Ver. 12. **In saying a new covenant, he hath made the first old.** Long ago, in Jeremiah's day, God showed by His promise of a new covenant that the former one had done its work; was antiquated and virtually obsolete. **And** (we know, for it is a general truth) **that which is becoming antiquated,** which is already obsolescent, **and is daily growing feebler with age,** is nigh to vanishing away. It is nearing the point where its power and its right to exist will both cease!

CHAP. IX. The argument interrupted by the preceding quotation is now resumed. The divineness and the beauty of the arrangements of the old covenant are admitted, and their significance, vers. 1–5; but they belonged to this world (ver. 1) and gave no peace to the conscience, and no free access to God; a provisional and ineffective institute awaiting the time when all should be reformed and completed, vers. 6–10. That time is now come. The entrance into the holiest is now opened; provision is made for the full forgiveness of all transgressions, even those under the ancient law (see ver. 15); and the conscience is purified by the efficacy of the blood of Christ, who is again to manifest Himself to those who wait for Him, and will bring in complete salvation, vers. 11–28.

Ver. 1. This verse concedes the excellency of the old economy. **It had ordinances of divine worship.** The writer speaks in the past tense, because he looks back to the original institution and the first tabernacle, partly also because from the vantage ground of the new covenant the old seems obsolete—**and its holy place of this world.** As the writer is commending the first covenant, 'of this world' can hardly be only depreciatory. The word used, when not used ethically, describes the world in its order and beauty; and this is part of the thought: of this world indeed, and yet costly and beautiful. Compare a similar word in 1 Tim. iii. 2, 'orderly' . . . The words at the beginning of the verse—'The first covenant then indeed'—are concessive and resumptive, taking up the thought in chap. viii. 7 and 13.

Ver. 2. The writer first notes the beauty of the holy place, and then (ver. 6) the holy ordinances of the service. **For a tabernacle was prepared** with two apartments, **the first wherein were the candlestick** (the golden candelabrum, with its upright shaft and six branches, three on each side, crowned with seven lamps: Solomon's temple had ten of those lamps; Herod's, again, but one), **and the table** (of acacia and overlaid with gold) **and the shewbread** (the loaves as set forth and presented before God), **which** part of the tabernacle **is called the holy place.**

Ver. 3. **And after** (generally of time, here of place, *behind*) **the second veil,** the same **tabernacle, which is called the holy of holies** (the holiest of all); **having** (belonging to it, not necessarily 'in it') **a golden censer** or an **altar of incense.** The word means either; and interpretations differ. Incense was taken by the high priest into the holy of holies from the very first, Lev. xvi. 12, 13, but a golden censer *is* not *named* in the Law, and only in the ritual of the second temple. On the other hand, if we take the other meaning, 'the altar of incense,' *that* stood not in the holy of holies, but without the veil; though it was regarded as belonging to the inner sanctuary (1 Kings vi. 22), and was sprinkled with the blood on the Day of Atonement.—**And the ark of the covenant** (so called because it contained the two tables of the Law) **overlaid** on all sides (without and within, Ex. xxv. 11, and with a golden rim or border, Ex. xxxvii. 2) **with gold, wherein was a golden pot having the manna and Aaron's rod that budded.** All these were in the holy of holies in the time of Moses. The first temple also possessed the ark (though not the manna or Aaron's rod, 1 Kings viii. 9). In the second temple the ark was wanting.—**And the tables of the covenant,** the stones on which the ten commandments were written by the finger of God: mentioned last, because the writer is enumerating the things that were most costly and beautiful.

Ver. 5. **And up over it** (the ark) **cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat.** These 'cherubim' were connected with the Shekinah, the visible glory of God. They were two in number, one at each end of the mercy-seat, and were beaten out of the same mass with it. A wing of each stretched over the mercy-seat till both met in the middle; their faces were opposite each other, and they looked downwards on the mercy-seat between them (Ex. xxv. 18–20). The mercy-seat was the lid or cover of the ark. On this the Divine glory rested as on a throne. It was by sprinkling the blood on and before this covering that the atonement for the nation was completed (Lev. xvi. 14, 15): and it was there that God manifested His presence and revealed His will (Ex. xxv. 22), and showed his favour (Ps. lxxx. 1). The glory above, the tables of the covenant, called also of testimony below, and the place of propitiation between, with all the vessels of the service, had each its lessons, but the writer cannot now discuss them.—**Of which one cannot now speak severally**—in detail. Everything was made under Divine direction (Ex. xxv. 8, 9), everything had significance. Some are explained elsewhere. But the writer hastens on to the ordinances of worship, and above all to the superiority of the great atoning work of the new economy.

Ver. 6. Meanwhile he notes the weakness of the old covenant and its fitness for this world only (vers. 9, 10). **And now all these things**—the apartments and their contents—**having been thus prepared** or arranged, **into the first tabernacle the priests go in continually, accomplishing**

(performing) the services. The ordinary priests are entering continually, *i.e.* without limits prescribed by law, twice at least every day (Ex. xxx. 7), to do the appointed service, sprinkling the blood of the sin-offering before the veil, dressing the lamps, burning incense on the golden altar, and once a-week changing the shewbread.

Ver. 7. **But into the second** tabernacle, the holy of holies, **the high priest alone once in the year.** Into this second part none of the priests were allowed to enter or even to look; but the high priest alone, and he only on one day—the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. xvi. 29). On that day he entered within the veil at least three times—first with the censer of burning coals and the incense, that the cloud might cover the mercy-seat and intercept the Divine glory (Lev. xvi. 12, 13); then with the blood of the bullock, which he sprinkled seven times before the mercy-seat (ver. 14); and then with the blood of the goat, which also he sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat (ver. 15), so that **not without blood which he offereth for himself and for the errors of the people.** It was his business to make atonement for sin, and this could not be done without blood. Nor was it enough that the blood should be shed at the door of the tabernacle; the high priest had to carry with him a portion of it within the veil, and there offer it by sprinkling it on and before the mercy-seat. And this atonement was made for himself and his house, *i.e.* the priests generally, and then for the sins of the people (Lev. xvi. 6, 14). Within the holy place the blood was sprinkled once upwards; seven times backwards before and on the mercy-seat. The horns of the altar were anointed with the blood of the two sacrifices, and the same mingled blood was sprinkled seven times before it, and then the remainder of the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar of burnt-offering. This offering of the blood is said to have cleansed the people once a year from all their sins (chap. vi. 16–34). Here the statement of the Law is restricted to sins of ignorance—'errors,' a term describing offences committed in no defiance of the Law, or with only a partial knowledge of their turpitude. They are thus marked off from those capital offences and presumptuous sins for which no provisions of mercy was made; in which, therefore, the sinner died without mercy (Num. xv. 27–31; see also Heb. x. 28).

Ver. 8. **The Holy Ghost this signifying,** *i.e.* by the arrangement which excluded all from the sanctuary except the high priest, who entered only on one day in the year—**that the way into the holiest**—heaven itself, the true antitype, not the holy of holies—**hath not yet been made manifest, while as** (an archaism, like *when as* [and the modern form *whereas*], stating *time during which*, with a slight intimation that the thing stated is the reason of the result) **the first tabernacle,** *i.e.* the holy place separated from the holy of holies, **is still standing**—these present tenses all call attention to the continuance of the Jewish worship and to the need of its ceasing. That is, while there is a distinction of tabernacle and tabernacle with a veil between them, and a *hidden* glory, there is no freedom of access. Let the veil be removed, and then the two tabernacles will become one; and so the first will be done away . . . To refer the 'first tabernacle' to the old covenant neither suits the usage of the context nor the description given elsewhere of the 'heavenly things' which are prior to the first tabernacle.

Ver. 9. **The which** tabernacle **is a figure** (literally a parable, an arrangement with a lesson) for, *i.e.* in reference to (or lasting till) **the time** [now] **present,** or [then] present, for neither is expressed. Either makes good sense. The former, 'now present,' better suits the writer's purpose; the latter, 'then present,' has found most favour with the commentators. The arrangement might have taught those who first witnessed it (then present) that the gifts and sacrifices which are still being offered (present tense) could not meet the needs of the human conscience or give free access to God. The arrangement teaches us ('now' present) the same lessons imposed, as it is till the fulness of the time when all is to be rightly arranged and with better results. And **according to which** parable (or tabernacle, *i.e.* a holy place with the holy of holies veiled and inaccessible—either meaning gives the same lessons, and the Greek admits either) **were offered gifts and sacrifices** which could not give peace to the conscience or satisfy God's justice.

Ver. 10. And the reason is plain, **being only with meats, and drinks, and divers washings** (or baptisms, a reference to the legal and traditional conditions of eating and drinking, comp. 1 Cor. viii., and Col. ii. 16-23, and to the various baptisms commanded by the law both for people and priests).—**Carnal ordinances.** They may have been performed in a right spirit. They may have been accompanied by some spiritual blessing. But they were mainly material, not spiritual. They purified the flesh and not the spirit. They failed to meet the demands of the awakened conscience and to bring back that blessed fellowship with God which sin destroys. Burdensome in themselves (so the word 'imposed' means, comp. Acts xv. 10–28), they were also inadequate for spiritual purposes. They were imposed on men to prepare them for better things, and for a better time, when all is to be put right in the conscience, in the life, and with God.

Such is the earthly sanctuary and its ordinances. The contrast, **the time of reformation**—not 'a time,' as if there were several, not quite '*the* time;' the Greek simply marks the quality of the time itself—'until what is to prove God's set time, when all is to be made straight'—is described in the following verses.

Ver. 11. Here begins the true antithesis to the preceding verses, though ver. 6 marks a contrast of another kind. That old economy was earthly, glorious indeed, but (ver. 6) ineffectual. The new economy has to do with another tabernacle not of this creation, with other blood, with a far completer redemption, and with the purification of the conscience and of the life (vers. 11–14). So it introduces a new covenant and a heavenly sanctuary (vers. 15-20), with complete forgiveness (ver. 26); and the only thing that remains is Christ's reappearance to complete salvation (vers. 27, 28).—**But Christ having come** (having appeared, a word used to describe the appearance of any one in history or on some important stage of life, Matt. iii. 1; Luke xii. 51), **a high priest of the good things to come** (not things that belong to the future state chiefly, but in conformity with the Jewish mode of speaking of them while they were yet future, the things that belong to the new covenant, extending indeed into the heavens

and the distant future, but beginning here and now), **by a greater and a more perfect tabernacle not made with hands,** that is, **not of this creation** (see under ver. 12).

Ver. 12. **Nor yet by the blood of goats** (put first because most characteristic of the Day of Atonement, Lev. xvi. 5, etc.—the two goats which made one sacrifice) **and calves** (called in ver. 13 bulls; both were males, one of the first year and the other of the second), **but by his own blood** (the same expression as in Acts xx. 28, so chap. xiii. 12) **he entered in once for all,** etc., *i.e.* by services of a greater and more perfect tabernacle—neither of human workmanship nor of created materials. Some regard 'by' or 'through' in ver. 11 as *local;* but the use of the same preposition in ver. 12 in the instrumental sense is against this view. Those who regard it as local interpret differently: 'Through Christ's body' (the true temple) is the common Patristic interpretation. Through the Church; or the world, the outer temple of the Creator; through the lower regions of the heavens; through the worshipping place of blessed spirits (Delitzsch), have all their advocates. Some who understand through as 'by means of,' render by means of Christ's human nature—the outer dwelling-place of God. But the interpretation given above is simpler and more natural. We know that Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands (ver. 24), but into heaven; and so it is not by the services of an earthly tabernacle, but by the services of a tabernacle far grander and more perfect He presents His offering and seeks forgiveness.—And **having obtained** (an emphatic form of expression implying energetic effort) **eternal redemption for us.** All here is in contrast, and the results not least. The Jewish high priest gained a pardon for the sins of the year, such a pardon as cancelled all ceremonial sin, fleshly defilements, and retained or regained for his worshippers their place in the theocracy; but Christ, by the one sacrifice of Himself, has obtained for us an everlasting deliverance from the guilt of sin, ending in a complete deliverance from the power of it, and that at the price of Himself or of His blood. He gave Himself for us, and He gave His blood, dying in our stead that we might live. Both expressions are scriptural (Tit. ii. 14; Eph. i. 7). The word here translated redemption (deliverance by payment of the price, by giving 'satisfaction,' Num. xxxv. 31, 32) is the shorter form (λύτρωσις); the longer form (ἀπολύτρωσις) is used in ver. 15, and again in a lower sense in chap. xi. 15. Both forms are found in St. Paul's Epistles. Redemption is obtained for us when Christ enters into the holy place, as redemption is made ours when His blood is applied to our consciences; both truths are consistent with the other teaching that atonement—expiation—was made when He died for our sins.

Ver. 13. **For if . . . and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctifieth unto** (*i.e.* so as to secure; the full expression implies result, not purpose) **the purity of the flesh.** This case of the 'ashes of the heifer' is one of the most suggestive symbols of the Law, and is well worth examination (see Num. xix.). The heifer without spot, slain by the priest without the camp, its blood sprinkled in the direction of the tabernacle, the animal itself burnt with solemn rites, its ashes laid up in a clean place to be used with water in cleansing those who had been defiled by contact with a dead body, itself a symbol and a result of sin—all are instructive, and all was done to secure an outward purity only.

Ver. 14. **How much more shall the blood of Christ . . . cleanse your conscience** from that impurity which shows the inward man to be as a dead corpse, producing only such works as have no pulse, no power or feeling of true and higher life. The context gives to 'dead works' in this passage a slightly different meaning from that in chap. vi. 1. And the purpose of this process is to secure not the common service of the Jewish worshipper—the service of an outward life; but the inward spiritual service of the living God—of God not as veiled and in symbols, but of God in His reality and holiness. Such is the work of Him **who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot** (1 Pet. i. 19) **unto God.** 'Through the eternal Spirit' has been variously explained. Through the Holy Spirit—say some—which was given to Him 'without measure,' or by which He was quickened and raised from the dead, and so entered into the holy place. Others, however, regard the expression as describing all in Christ that was not human—His higher nature, His Divine personality. This view is favoured by the double fact that it is the writer's purpose to describe the intrinsic excellence of His offering, and that elsewhere 'the Spirit' is used in this sense when applied to our Lord. As to His flesh—His human nature—He was son of David; as to the Spirit, what in Him was not human nature, He was the Son of God (Rom. i. 3, 4; 1 Pet. iii. 18; 1 Tim. iii. 16). The victims of the Law gave up an animal life all unconsciously. Christ gave Himself, His own will and heart consenting—not the man only, but all that was Divine in Him: His higher nature which, before time, acquiesced in the purpose of the Father, and that same nature now a conscious agent in effecting it.

Ver. 15. **And for this cause** (for the reason that His blood is thus efficacious, ver. 14, or because He has performed this great work, vers. 11–14) **he is mediator of a new** (emphatic) **covenant, in order that, death having taken place** (viz. His own) for redemption from (or expiration of) **the transgressions under the first covenant, they that have been called** ('partakers of a heavenly calling,' chap. iii. 1) **may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.** The first covenant left its transgressions unforgiven. It waited for the offering that had efficacy. The death of Christ, therefore, has a double work. It is offered once for all, and extends its efficacy forward to the end of time and backward to the entrance of the Law. It is the procuring cause of forgiveness for all dispensations (see Rom. iii. 24–26). The emphasis of the last words is on 'may receive the promise,' *i.e.* be put in possession of what was promised—the eternal inheritance, the blessing of the Gospel, 'the good things to come,' including the eternal life, which is the completion of them all. . . . As the writer is speaking of the Old Covenant, those 'who are called' refers properly to the Jews, but the principle applies to the Gentiles also, and to all economies.

Ver. 16. And it is a covenant—with all the requisite validity. '**For where a covenant is, there must also be** (brought in—or, there is

necessarily implied) **the death of the covenanting victim.**

Ver. 17. **For a covenant is of force over the dead** (or on the condition that some persons (or things) have died), **since it has no avail at all while the covenanting victim liveth.**

Ver. 18. **Whence neither hath the first covenant been inaugurated** (or ratified) **without blood.** Those verses are specially difficult. The logic of the passage seems to require the rendering now given. It does not follow that because a testator must die before his will can take effect, *therefore* the first *covenant* was inaugurated with blood. Διαθήκη, moreover, is everywhere else in Scripture 'covenant,' as it is in the immediate context, and it seems better to keep to that meaning throughout: all the more as the notion of a will, though familiar to Western civilisation, was not familiar in countries where each child's portion was settled by law. There are difficulties, however, on the other side. 'Covenanting [victim]' is not a known meaning of the word here used. It means generally a covenanting person or a testator. 'Over the dead' is commonly used also only of *dead men*. Both difficulties are lessened, however, by the peculiar facts of the case. All solemn covenants under the Law were made valid by the death of a victim which represented the covenanting persons, and pledged them on peril of their lives to faithfulness; and so 'the covenanting victim' is spoken of under the same name as the covenanting person—the one representing the other. If the rendering 'testament' is preferred, and 'testator,' it is best to regard vers. 16 and 17 as an illustrative argument, a parallel case, suggested partly by the mention of an inheritance and partly by the double meaning of the Greek word (*covenant* or *testament*), which is applied to any arrangement or distribution by will, or in any other way.

Ver. 19. **For** (a proof of the assertion in ver. 18) **when every commandment had been spoken by Moses according to the law** (as the law directed, without any variation from it) **unto all the people, he took the blood of the calves and the goats** (these last are not expressed in Ex. xxiv. 6-8, but are implied in v. 5) **with water and scarlet wool and hyssop** (those details are not named in Ex. xxiv. 6-8, but each is given elsewhere. Either God commanded Moses to do these things, as they were done later, or the writer is giving in brief a summary of the whole law as at first instituted), **and sprinkled both the book itself** (which probably lay on the altar) **and all the people.**

Ver. 20. The design of this sprinkling is now explained — **Saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God** (the Hebrew is Jehovah, and the Greek 'the Lord;' probably God is used to preserve the O. T. character of the quotation; the N. T. covenant, the Supper especially, is connected with 'the Lord') **commanded to you-ward.**

Ver. 21. **Moreover, the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry** (the service) **he sprinkled in like manner with blood** (probably later: it was certainly done every year, Lev. xvi. 16–20. Josephus, however, gives the same fact as occurring at the inauguration of the covenant, and in very similar words, *Antiq.* iii. 8, 6).

Ver. 22. **And according to the law almost all things** (some were purified with water, Ex. xix. 10, etc.; others with water and the ashes of the heifer, Num. xxxi. 22–24; but the things which were specially appropriated to the worship of God) **are cleansed with** (in) **blood; and apart from shedding of blood**—the word here brings up the language of the Lord's Supper, 'Shed for you' (Luke xxii. 20)—**there is no remission** (forgiveness). The 'almost' of the first clause applies also to the second (see Lev. v. 11–13). The need of blood and the significance of it may be seen in Lev. xvii. 11.

Ver. 23. **The patterns**; rather, the representations, the heavenly things themselves being the original 'patterns shown to Moses in the mount' (viii. 5), whence the earthly copies were taken: **but the heavenly things themselves** (heaven and the things therein, see ver. 24) **by better sacrifices than these.** How the heavenly things need purifying has been much discussed. The simplest explanation is that the heavenly things received purification through the blood of Christ, in the same sense as the tabernacle received purification through the blood that was offered in it. The tabernacle had no impurity of its own. It needed purifying because of the uncleanness of the people, and because of the uncleanness which the entrance of the people without atonement would have introduced. Forgiveness without atonement would have sullied the holiness of God. By the blood of Christ God is just while justifying the ungodly. The place that was unapproachable by reason of our sin, is made free to the guiltiest: but for this purpose there were needed **sacrifices better far than** those that Aaron offered.

Ver. 24. 'The heavenly things:' **for not into a holy place made with hands did Christ enter, like in pattern** (answering to the original, 'the typical form') **to the true, now to show** (to manifest) **himself before** (the face of) **God for us**; His passover our offering, and by virtue of 'the Eternal Spirit—His own Divine nature,' with all the power of an endless life.

Ver. 25. And as Christ has not entered into the holy place made with hands, **neither has he entered into heaven that he should offer himself often** (the reference is not to His dying, but to His presenting Himself and His blood. The dying is named later, ver. 26), **just as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood of others** (*i.e.* 'not his own,' as the Syr. renders it); **else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world.** As His blood was His own, and as His death was essential to the offering of Himself, and necessary in order that He might have something to offer (viii. 3), He must in that case have often suffered. The contrary, however, is the fact.—**But now,** the case is that **once** for all **at the end** (the completion) **of the ages** which have elapsed since sin entered, antediluvian, patriarchal, Mosaic, **hath he been manifested,** *i.e.* in our flesh (1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Pet. i. 20), **for the putting away of sin** in its guilt and power **by the sacrifice of himself.**

Vers. 27, 28. And there can be no second dying, and so no second offering of Himself unto God. Such an arrangement would be against all analogy and all experience. Since man as such can die but once, so must it be with **the Christ** also: for in all things He is made like unto His brethren. And as it is the judgment which awaits all men beyond the grave, so there is no second self-offering of Christ between the First Advent

and the Second. As human life with all its works comes to an end in death, and only judgment remains; so the atonement of Christ is complete, and nothing remains but for Him to return—and judge. But no; the writer does not care to end so. He shall appear to them that wait for Him, unto complete salvation.

All here is still in contrast. When the high priest returned from the Holy of Holies after having made atonement there, he made a second atonement in his priestly robes for himself and his people (Lev. xvi. 24), 'for the sins of his most holy things.' When Christ appears coming forth from His holy place, He will appear without sin, and therefore without a sin-offering, and completing the blessedness of those He has redeemed!

CHAP X. 1–18. We now reach the conclusion of the argument, which is also in part a repetition. Christ's offering of Himself, as contrasted with the yearly offerings of the Law, is the completion of the will and purpose of God (vers. 1–10). Christ's priestly service, as contrasted with the daily services of the priests, oft-repeated and all imperfect, is for ever perfected by His one priestly act, and in His kingly authority (11–14): and His finished work is the inauguration of a New Covenant, in which the law being written on the heart, and sin put away and forgotten, no further offering is needed or allowed (15–18).

Ver. 1. **For**—a particle that connects the argument with the last verses of chap. ix. The sacrifice of Christ will not be repeated, we are told in ix. 28. Nor need it, is the statement here—**the law having**, as we know it has, **a shadow** only—a mere outline **of the good things** which belong to the world **to come** (chap. vi. 5), of which Christ is High Priest (ix. 11), **not the very image—the very form—of the things**, *i.e.* the heavenly realities themselves (comp. Rom. viii. 29), **they can never**—at any time or anyhow—**with the same sacrifices year by year** which they offer **continually**—words that describe the ever-recurring cycle of the same sacrifices for sin—**make perfect those who are ever drawing nigh to God.**

Ver. 2. **Else would they**—these same sacrifices **—not have ceased to be offered**, because the **worshippers**—both priests and people—**would have had no longer any conscience**—any consciousness of the guilt—**of sin being once for all completely purified?** The whole clause is best treated as a question, as is clear from the next verse.

Ver. 3. **But**, on the contrary, **there is in those sacrifices a remembrance made**—a recalling to mind, on the part of the worshippers and on God's part—**of sins year by year.**

Ver. 4. Nor could it be otherwise, for the sacrifices themselves are inherently defective. This teaching may seem to contradict the statement that 'the blood upon the altar' makes an atonement for the soul (Lev. xvii. 11), and is appointed ('given') for that purpose. The fact is, that the blood of the bullock or of the goat (the sin-offering on the Day of Atonement) could not weigh against the guilt of a nation, or even of a single worshipper. It could only sanctify to the purifying of the flesh (ix. 13), restoring the sinner to living membership with the literal Israel. It cancelled ceremonial guilt, not spiritual sin, and gave legal outward purity, not spiritual regeneration. The annual sacrifice was only a shadow and prophecy of another sacrifice, in which the Divine will was to be perfectly accomplished.

Ver. 5. **Wherefore**, let me describe, says the writer, in O. T. language, the voluntary offering of Christ and His setting aside of the offerings of the law—**when coming into the world**—the incarnate Messiah, to do the will of His Father—**he saith, Sacrifice** (victim) **and offering** (gift) **thou desiredst not.** This language and the language of ver. 6 has created difficulty. All these offerings were commanded, and were offered according to the Law (ver. 8). Why then did not God desire them? or find pleasure in them? When offered indeed in hypocrisy, to the neglect of moral obedience, or when trusted in for righteousness and acceptance, they were, as we know, rejected. But these reasons are not assigned here. The explanation, therefore, is to be sought elsewhere. It is of atonement for sin the writer is speaking. In sacrifice or mere suffering God cannot delight, and if it is spiritually powerless, insufficient to atone for sin, it is useless, and may even be worse than useless. In whole burnt-offerings (see Lev. i. 16, 27), in sacrifices for sin of whatever kind (sin-offerings, Lev. iv. 3, 20, etc.; trespass-offerings, Lev. v. 15; peace-offerings, Lev. iii., vii. 11–23), God had no pleasure, because none, no one, nor all combined, were an adequate propitiation. But when Christ came in the body which the Father had prepared, and to offer the sacrifice of Himself, the Father declared that in Him at every stage He was well pleased (Matt. iii. 17, xvii. 5); and so because of His 'obedience unto death,' He became Lord over all. The clause, 'a body hast Thou prepared for me,' has created difficulty. The present Hebrew text is, 'My ears hast Thou opened or pierced.' The rendering 'pierced' is supposed to refer to the man who became a life-long servant under the circumstances described in Ex. xxi. 6, etc.; but this view is not favoured by the plural form 'my *ears*,' nor is the Hebrew word here used, the usual word for 'piercing.' 'My ears hast Thou opened' is therefore the better rendering, describing as it does hearty and devoted obedience, as in Isa. l. 5. It is not easy to explain the change in the Septuagint. Perhaps the Greek text better represents to a Greek reader the general sense. Perhaps there has been confusion in copying Greek MSS., or possibly some later alteration of the Hebrew. Each theory has its advocates.

Ver. 7. **Then said I, Lo, I am come (in the volume or roll of the book it is written of me)** —the book of the ancient Law from Moses downwards (see Acts iii. 18; 1 Pet. i. 11)—**to do thy will, O God.** To do the will of God is to obey His commands, and especially in this context the command to lay down His life (John x. 17, xiv. 31). It is on this one thing the writer is insisting. That He might render this obedience a body was prepared for Him, and a nature capable of those sufferings both in heart and in life which were necessary to expiate sin, and fulfil the one righteousness whereby many were to be made righteous. This was, indeed, the chief design of His coming (Matt. xx. 28; 1 Tim. i. 15).

Ver. 8. The writer now comments on the quotation: **Saying above as he** (*i.e.* Christ, see ver. 5) **does say**, etc. *Which* is more than the relative—it describes quality, and makes this remark apply to all offered under the Law—then and now (present tense).

Ver. 9. **Then saith he** (literally, hath He said), **He** (that is, Christ) **taketh away the first, that he may establish** (set up) **the second.** Legal sacrifices are abolished that there may be substituted for them, the will—the good pleasure of God, which Christ came to do by the one sacrifice of Himself.

Ver. 10. **In which will,** and in the accomplishment of it, we have been and are sanctified—freed from the guilt of sin (and so we are said to be sanctified in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. i. 2) and made morally fit for God's service—**by the offering of the body of Christ,** 'which Thou hast prepared for me,' **once for all.**

Vers. 11–14. With this appropriate result—that He is exalted as Priest and King to the right hand of his Father.—**And every priest** ('high priest' has less MS. authority and is less appropriate) **standeth** (not permitted to sit in God's presence as if he were at home and his work were done), **ministering and offering oftentimes,** morning and evening, day after day, **the same sacrifices,** with no result. All that were offered had the same deficiency—**that they could nohow and never strip off all round, take clean away** the guilt of **sins.** Some sense of relief, some hope they might give; but the sin itself still clung to the worshippers.

Ver. 12. **But he** (this Priest) **having offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, took his seat on the right hand of God,** an evidence of the completeness of His work, which left no room for another sacrifice or for the repetition of His own. His priesthood indeed continues, and the presentation of His sacrifice—'the perpetual oblation;' but His atoning work is over. 'For ever,' in perpetuity, uninterruptedly, may be connected with 'took His seat,' but the usage of this Epistle is to connect it with the words that precede, vii. 3, x. 1.

Ver. 13. Not a second time can He suffer: Only **waiting as he now is till,** in fulfilment of the Divine promise (Ps. cx. 1), **his enemies be made the footstool of his feet.** The Jewish priest stood fearful and uneasy in the holy place—hastening to depart when the service was done as from a place to which he had only temporary access. Christ sits as at home, having completed His work and now awaiting His full reward.

Ver. 14. **For by one offering he hath perfected for ever,** in unbroken continuance, **them that are being sanctified.** Here the word used is the present participle—**not as in ver. 10,** the perfect—and calls attention to the progressive purification that belongs to the redeemed. The word 'sanctified' implies both the imputed and the imparted righteousness of Christ. When the perfect is used, and we are said to be sanctified in Christ, imputed purification from the guilt of sin is the predominant thought; when the present is used, it points rather to the subjective process whereby Christ's work is realized in the peace and holiness of believers.

Vers. 15–17. And with this teaching agrees the old prophetic word which makes inward holiness and absolute forgiveness the most characteristic marks of the new covenant whereof **the Holy Ghost also bears us witness**—then follow passages that have been quoted before (viii. 12). The verbal differences in the two quotations are suggestive, though they do not change the general sense. For 'with the house of Israel' (viii. 10) we have now 'with them,' so that the promise is denationalized and wider. In the earlier passage the mind is first influenced, and then the heart; in the later, the heart is first changed and then the mind. Both are changed—is the truth common to the two passages. The order alone differs. Even this is suggestive. Renewal and forgiveness are really contemporaneous. The faith that renews is also the faith that justifies. The dead letter is written on the heart, and becomes a living spirit; and contemporaneous with this great change, and the effect of the same faith, sin is not only forgiven, it is forgotten and remembered no more. Other sacrifices are remembrances of sins; this sacrifice is the complete obliteration of them all.

Ver. 18. And plainly **where there is forgiveness of these,** there is no need of further atonement; and the sacrifices of the Law which were instituted to meet and deepen man's sense of a need they could not satisfy, and which secured at best outward forgiveness only, are for ever done away.

Here ends the threefold central argument of the Epistle, that Christ is a Priest after the order of Melchisedec, not of Aaron, vii. 1–25; that He is the Mediator of a better covenant, vii. 26–ix. 12; and that His sacrifice is of everlasting efficacy and is fittingly followed by His kingdom, ix. 13–x. 18: the first eighteen verses of chapter x. being devoted to a repetition of the main positions and to the confirmation of them from the Old Testament.

CHAPTER X. 19–39.

Practical Lessons, x. 19–39.—*Grounds for Stedfastness, and Means of promoting it, and Motives,* vers. 19–21, 22–25, 26–39.

19 HAVING therefore, brethren, [a] boldness to enter [b] into the
20 holiest[1] by the blood of Jesus, by [c] a new and living
way, which he hath consecrated[2] for us, [d] through the veil, that
21 is to say, his flesh; and *having* [e] an high[3] priest over [f] the
22 house of God; [g] let us draw near with a true heart [h] in full
assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [i] from an evil

[a] Rom. v. 2; Eph. ii. 18, iii. 12.
[b] Ch. ix. 8, 12
[c] Jo. x. 9, xiv 6; ch. ix. 8.
[d] Mat. xxvii. 51; ch. ix. 3
[e] Zech. vi. 11, etc.; ch. iv. 14.
[f] 1 Tim. iii. 15.
[g] Ch. iv. 16.
[h] Eph. iii. 12; Jas. i. 6; 1 Jo. iii. 21.
[i] Ch. ix. 14.

[1] *or,* the holy place
[2] inaugurated, opened
[3] great

23 conscience, and [h] our bodies [4] washed with pure water. [i] Let
us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for
24 [m] he *is* faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another
25 to provoke unto love and to good works: [n] not forsaking the
assembling of ourselves together, as the manner [5] of some *is;*
but exhorting *one another:* and [o] so much the more, as ye see
26 [p] the day approaching.[6] For [q] if we sin [7] wilfully [r] after that we
have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no
27 more [8] sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for [9] of
judgment and [s] fiery indignation,[10] which shall devour [11] the ad-
28 versaries. [t] He that despised Moses' law died [12] without mercy
29 [u] under [13] two or three witnesses: [v] of how much sorer punish-
ment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden
under foot the Son of God, and [w] hath counted [14] the blood of
the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy [15] thing,
30 [x] and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we
know him that hath [16] said, [y] Vengeance *belongeth* unto me,[17] I
will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, [z] The Lord shall
31 judge his people. [a] *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands
32 of the living God. But [b] call to remembrance the former days,
in which, [c] after ye were illuminated,[18] ye endured [d] a great
33 fight [19] of afflictions; partly, whilst [20] ye were made [e] a gazing-
stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst [20]
34 [f] ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye
had compassion of me [g] in my bonds, and [21] [h] took joyfully the
spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that [i] ye have in
35 heaven [22] a better and an enduring substance.[23] Cast not away
therefore your confidence, [k] which [24] hath great recompence of
36 reward. [l] For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have
done the will of God, [m] ye might [25] receive the promise.

37 For [n] yet a little [26] while,
And [o] he that shall come will [27] come, and will [28] not tarry.
38 Now [p] the just [29] shall live by faith:
But if *any man* [30] draw back, my soul shall have [31] no
pleasure in him

39 But we are not of them [q] who draw back [32] unto perdition; but
of them that [r] believe [33] to the saving [34] of the soul.

[h] Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Tit. ii. 14; 2 Cor. vii. 1.
[i] Ch. iv. 14.
[m] 1 Cor. i. 9, x. 13; 1 Thes. v. 24; 2 Thes. iii. 3; ch. xi. 11.
[n] Acts ii. 42; Jude 19.
[o] Rom. xiii. 11.
[p] Phil. iv. 5; 2 Pet. iii. 9, 11, 14.
[q] Num. xv. 30; ch. vi. 4.
[r] 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.
[s] Is. xxvi. 11, Sept.; Ezek. xxxvi. 5; Zeph. i. 18, iii. 8; 2 Thes. i. 8; ch. xii. 29.
[t] Ch. ii. 2.
[u] Deut. xvii. 2, 6, xix. 15; Mat. xviii. 16; Jo. viii. 17; 2 Cor. xiii. 1.
[v] Ch. ii. 3, xii. 25.
[w] Ex. xxiv. 8; Lev. xvi. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 29; ch. xiii. 20.
[x] Mat. xii 31, 32; Eph. iv. 30.
[y] Deut. xxxii. 35; Rom. xii. 19.
[z] Deut. xxxii. 36; Ps. l. 4, cxxxv. 14.
[a] Lu. xii. 5.
[b] Gal. iii. 4; 2 Jo. 8.
[c] Ch. vi 4.
[d] Phil. i. 29, 30; Col. ii. 1.
[e] 1 Cor. iv. 9.
[f] Phil. i 7, iv. 14; 1 Thes. ii. 14.
[g] Phil. i. 7; 2 Tim. i. 16.
[h] Mat. v. 12; Acts v. 41; Jas. i. 2.
[i] Mat. vi. 20, xix. 21; Lu. xii. 33; 1 Tim. vi. 19.
[k] Mat. v. 12, x 32.
[l] Lu. xxi. 19; Gal. vi. 9; ch. xii. 1.
[m] Col. iii 24; ch. ix. 15; 1 Pet. i. 9.
[n] Is. xxvi. 20; Lu. xviii. 8; 2 Pet. iii. 9.
[o] Hab. ii. 3, 4.
[p] Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11.
[q] 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.
[r] Acts xvi. 30, 31; 1 Thes. v. 9; 2 Thes. ii. 14.

[4] body
[5] custom
[6] drawing nigh
[7] *rather*, go on sinning
[8] *insert* a
[9] *or*, reception
[10] *lit.* indignation, *or*, fierceness of fire
[11] *rather*, hath set at nought
[12] dieth
[13] *rather*, on the evidence of
[14] deemed
[15] *lit.* common, *or*, unclean
[16] *omit* hath
[17] *or*, is mine (*as in Rom.* xii. 19)
[18] enlightened (*as in* vi. 4)
[19] *rather*, conflict
[20] *rather*, in that, *or*, being made, *and*, becoming
[21] *read*, on them that were in bonds, and ye
[22] *read*, that ye have yourselves
[23] *i.e.* possession
[24] the which
[25] may
[26] very little
[27] cometh shall
[28] shall
[29] *read*, my just (*or*, righteous) one
[30] he
[31] hath
[32] *lit.* of drawing back
[33] *lit.* of faith
[34] *or*, gaining

CHAP. X. 19-39. For nearly four chapters the argument has remained unbroken by those exhortations which abound in the earlier parts of the Epistle. From chapter vii. 1 to x. 18 the reasoning is close and continuous; but the one great purpose of the Epistle is never absent from the writer's mind. Here he resumes the appeals with which the fourth chapter closes, and repeats with characteristic differences, as suggested by the train of the thought, the solemn warnings of chapter vi. 1-8.

Vers. 19-21. **Having therefore** (on the grounds already named), **brethren** (again he puts himself in communion with those he addresses as in chapter iii.), **confidence by the blood of Jesus** (see on chap. iii. 6) **in respect to** [going] **the way into the holiest, a new and living way which he first opened** (or inaugurated) **for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh, and having a great priest** (who is at once Priest and King) **over the house of God**, let us use the way that is opened in joyous assurance (22), let us hold fast our profession (23) and complete the graces of our character, faith and hope (22, 23), by the love which is the crown of all (24). Through the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ and His position in heaven, where He has entered for us, we have holy filial confidence in approaching God,—a feeling that contrasts with the fear and bondage of Old Testament worshippers. Christ has preceded us (as forerunner, vi. 20), we follow along the way He has formed and opened, knowing ourselves to be sanctified by the one oblation of blood which was shed on earth and presented in heaven; and so we have access to the holy place, which is heaven itself (ix. 24): there is the throne of grace (iv. 16), and there Jesus, the Minister of the holy places (viii. 2), appears for us. This way is further described as a new and living way,—'new;' literally, 'newly slain;' but in common Hellenistic usage the meaning is 'newly made;' and yet there is probably a reference to the fact that it is made with blood and yet living,—the opposite of what is lifeless and powerless,—the way opened by Christ which leads and carries on all that enter it into the home above. He who is 'the Way and the Life' is not dimly described in these half-contradictory words.—**Through the veil—that is, his flesh**, has been differently interpreted. The thing to note is that '*through*' does not mark the instrument, but the intervening hindrance that needed to be removed or rent that man might enter—the way was through it unto God, so that the true parallel is Matt. xxvii. 51. Christ came in 'the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,' and it is exactly the sin and the sinful flesh His incarnation and dying represent, that come between us and God; and when He died for sin, the veil was rent; and when He ascended and entered heaven for us, it was completely taken away. Thus it is that we are reconciled in the body of his flesh through death (Col. i. 22).

Ver. 21. **A great priest**—not high priest chiefly, for which the word high priest is always used in this Epistle, but a priest who is enthroned at God's right hand—**over the house of God**—not a servant like Moses in the house (iii. 5, 6), but over it, *i.e.* over the universal Church, including both the heaven of glory (John xiv. 2) and the Church on earth. We are under Christ in our earthly pilgrimage, as we shall be in the home above; and indeed we have both privileges, for we reach the inmost recesses of the very sanctuary of God even now by faith and prayer (ver. 22).

Ver. 22. **Let us draw near**—every hindrance created by God's holiness and our own sin is removed—the way is opened—let us come to God in loving trust and holy service; and so worshippers are called 'comers' (unto God), vii. 25, x. 1, xi. 6—**with a true heart**—free from hypocrisy and double-mindedness and in harmony with the realities of the Gospel (John i. 9), being what we seem and seeming what we ought to be, 'the perfect heart' of Isa. xxxviii. 3—**in full assurance of faith**, *i.e.* without any diffidence as to our right of approach or our acceptance through the entrance and presence of our priest. Hope and love come afterwards (vers. 23, 24), 'these three,' the usual Pauline triad (1 Cor. xiii. 13; 1 Thess. i. 3, 5, 8; Col. i. 4). The three assurances of Scripture, of understanding (Col. ii. 2), of faith, and of hope, are great blessings which all Christians should try and perfect. All the errors and doubts, the discomforts and fears, of Christian men are traceable to the defectiveness of these graces. Israel's right of access is not comparable to ours. They were sprinkled with blood at Sinai (chap. ix. 19); the priests washed hands and feet before every sacrificial service (Ex. xxx. 29), and the high priest washed his body twice on the Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi.); but these were external sprinklings of blood and external washings, while ours are operations of grace. We are **sprinkled as to our hearts**, so as to be cleansed **from an evil conscience**—an inward justifying through sprinkling of the blood of Christ (1 Pet. i. 2) which was shed for this very purpose, and is therefore called the blood of sprinkling (chap. ix. 14): **and our bodies washed with pure water**, with reference still to the divers washings of the Law (see chap. ix. 10), whereby both people and priests were purified for approaching to God, but with deeper significance. The blood under the Law typified the cleansing of priest and people from the guilt of sin, and the washing typified the cleansing of them from the pollution and defilement of it; so our justification through the blood of Christ is inseparable from that inward renewal which we call a new and regenerate nature. The faith that justifies is always the beginning of a holy character: both are essential to acceptable service and to acceptable fellowship with God (for the need of this double work, see Tit. ii. 14, iii. 5). Some commentators understand by the washing of the body the rite of baptism (Delitzsch, Alford, etc.), and it is not improbable that this may have been in the writer's mind; but it is not consistent with sound interpretation to make one rite the antitype of another. Antitypes are spiritual realities, and if baptism is implied at all it must be baptism in closest connection with the grace it symbolizes; in short, it must be the spiritual significance of the ordinance rather than the mere ordinance itself.

Ver. 23. Thus forgiven and renewed and sprinkled with blood, washed as with water, heaven is ours, though only in hope (Rom. viii. 24), and what remains is **that we hold fast the profession of our hope** (the undoubted reading) without wavering. Those who refer the previous clause to baptism find here an argument for that view: 'hold fast' the hope which you expressed when you confessed Christ in baptism, became conformed to Him in His death, and vowed to walk henceforth in newness of life (Rom. vi. 3-15;

Col. ii. 12; Gal. iii. 27)—a good sense; and yet confession is generally used in this Epistle without specific reference to baptism (chap. iv. 14, iii. 1), and the change of reading from 'faith' to 'hope' points rather to the view that it is not chiefly the baptismal answer they are to remember, but the general hope in Christ which their daily life and speech have avowed to the world. Their hope is not to 'waver,' but is to be stedfast (chap. iii. 14), neither allured by worldly pleasures nor frightened by persecutions, doubting neither the greatness nor the certainty of the reward.—**For faithful is he that promised**—a common Pauline formula (1 Thess. v. 24; 1 Cor. i. 9, x. 13, etc.). A lying god, a perjured god (chap. vi. 18), is not the God of the covenant or of the Bible.

Ver. 24. **And let us** (who have the same right of approach, the same interest in one another's holiness, the same common relation to one Lord—all still depending on ver. 19) **well consider** (the weakness, the capabilities, the dangers, the preciousness of the graces of one another) **to provoke unto love**, etc. (in the old sense of calling forth—literally, 'to the sharpening or quickening of love,' etc.), and kind beneficent works which are its appropriate fruit. Such provocation is the only provocation the Gospel recognises, and it must be carried on from proper principles and with Gospel motives so as to confirm our faith and hope. A loving Christian community striving for the faith of the Gospel is sure to be stedfast (Phil. i. 27, 28)—a loving temper is a wonderful aid to faith. The connection between states of heart and belief is far closer than most suppose (ver. 25), as also is the connection between faith and the maintenance of fellowship with Christians.

Ver. 25. **Not forsaking** (the original is stronger—not deserting, not leaving in the lurch) **the assembling of yourselves together**—a phrase found only here and in 2 Thess. ii. 1, 'Our gathering together unto Christ.' The reference is not chiefly to the meetings of the Church as a Church, but to all the meetings of Christian brethren whereby brotherly love and kindly service are promoted—**as the manner of some is**—an expression which shows that it is not of apostasy as yet the writer is speaking, but only of the indifference which comes perilously near it and is often its forerunner—**but exhorting one another**—comforting, strengthening, entreating, is the meaning of the term, both by word and by example. This is part of the pastor's work (Rom. xii. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 2; Tit. i. 9), but not exclusively. All who have knowledge are to admonish one another (Rom. xv. 14). The same precept has been given before (chap. iii. 12, 13), and now it is enforced by the fact that 'the day' was seen to be approaching, the briefest description of Christ's coming to judgment, found only here and in 1 Cor. iii. 13: the day of days, the last of time, the first of eternity. And yet, as this day was seen to be approaching, the immediate reference is probably to the destruction of Jerusalem, of which there were signs already in the earth and the sky—the day so long foretold (Luke xxi. 22, and with its signs, viii. 12); the day which was to end the Jewish Church and State, and to punish that people for their rejection of the Messiah and their persecution of His followers; though perseverance unto the end (Matt. xxiv. 13) was the only way of escaping the calamities that were coming upon their nation, and the still more dreadful calamities which await those who, having been once enlightened, apostatize from the Christian faith. 'The day of the Lord' is at once the day of complete salvation and the day of final judgment; and the expression may be used in a lower sense—it is the day of great delivering mercy, and it is the day of decisive judgment, and the day of our death.

Ver. 26. **For if we sin wilfully**; rather, are wilfully continuing in sin. It is a word which needs to be noted. First of all there is no 'if' in the passage; it is stated as an actual case, not a supposed one. Then the emphasis is on 'wilfully' and on continuance in sin. In a sense all sin implies the consent of the will for a time; and yet there is a distinction. Paul was a blasphemer and a persecutor; but he did it ignorantly in unbelief. Peter was a true disciple, and nevertheless he denied Christ with curses and oaths; but not wilfully, rather apparently through passing fear (Matt. xxvi. 74, 75). The expression seems taken from Num. xv. 30, 31, where sinning wilfully is described as doing something presumptuously, with a high hand, and by one who despises the Word of the Lord. The willing sinner is one who *will* sin. Nor is it a single act that is denounced, but a permanent state (not an aorist, but the present), continuance in a sinful course, and such continuance as implies apostasy. Moreover, it is the state of one who has received the knowledge of the truth, and who knows it to be truth (not as in Paul's case, and not as in the case of the murderers who crucified Christ ignorantly, and some of whom became obedient to the faith). They were enlightened; they received the word with joy; for a while they believed (Luke viii. 13). And this 'knowledge of the truth,' it may be added, is found only here in this Epistle, though common in Paul's writings. Such was their character; and yet they gave up the Gospel, trod under foot the Son of God, counted His blood an unholy, a common, even a profane thing, offered insult to the Spirit of grace. They rejected that one sacrifice which completed and ended the sacrifices of the ancient Law, against their better knowledge, and resolved to return to their former sinful life; and for them there is no longer remaining any sacrifice for sin.

Ver. 27. **The only thing left is a fearful award, an awful reservation, of judgment and fiery indignation** (fervour of fire—flaming fire, 2 Thess. i. 8; the heat of the consuming fire of God Himself, chap. xii. 29), **which shall devour those that oppose.** The word 'reservation,' 'award,' is found only here in the New Testament, though the verb is not infrequent. It always means in common Greek reservation (in a literal or a figurative sense), and this is probably its meaning here. It describes not what is expected, but what will certainly be, and in truth what is already in reserve—'a reception of judgment.'

Ver. 28. This awful destiny which awaits wilful apostates, judgment without mercy, is now illustrated and enforced from the law.—**He that hath despised** (literally, any one having despised) **Moses' law dieth without mercy upon the testimony of** (before) **two or three witnesses**—not in every case; it is simply a general principle. Moses' Law attached to certain violations of it the doom of death. Some eleven kinds of sin were thus punished:—wilful murder, obstinate disobedience to parents, blasphemy, idolatry, etc.

(Deut. xvii. 2–7). The phrases of this verse are taken from this last instance, and, as the sentence of death is said in that case to be carried out with unusual severity, 'without mercy' no doubt refers to it. Idolatry was treason against Jehovah, and the idolater was an apostate from God. Apostasy from Christ answers to the wilful, deliberate idolatry of the Law, and is the sin condemned here with a condemnation proportioned to the fuller light and the greater privileges of the Gospel.

Ver. 29. **Of how much sorer punishment** (a word used only here, and meaning punishment in vindication of the honour of a broken law; compare Acts xxii. 5). The phrases that follow describe the acts of the apostate Christian.—**He tramples under foot** (an expression of ruthless contempt) **the Son of God**—Him who has been proved to be above the mediator of the old covenant, and above angels and prophets. He treats the sacrifice of blood under the covenant as a common thing, nay, as a profane thing—as the blood of one who claimed to be what the apostate now denies Him to be, and who is, therefore, guilty of blasphemy—the blood, moreover, **wherewith** (or rather in which, *i.e.* sprinkled with which) **he was sanctified** (Lev. xvi. 19). What is this but the profanation of what he himself admitted to be most sacred. Who 'was sanctified'? Christ, who did 'sanctify Himself'? Hardly; for He is never said to sanctify Himself **with his own blood**; and, moreover, the word 'sanctify' is always used elsewhere in this Epistle in the sense of cleansing from the guilt of sin by the blood of sacrifice (chap. ii. 11, ix. 13, xiii. 12). The person, therefore, said to be sanctified is the apostate himself. But in what sense? Not in the sense of the Divine purpose or will (Stier—see chap. x. 10), not in the sense that he tramples upon blood wherewith we believers are sanctified (Calvin); but in the sense that he himself, the apostate, had claimed and had professed to be sanctified by it. So all the members of the first churches are addressed as saints elect, sanctified (1 Cor. i. 2; 1 Pet. i. 2), for this was their professed character. Similarly Peter speaks of the fruitless professor as having been cleansed from his old sins (2 Pet. i. 9), and of false teachers, who denied the Lord that bought them (2 Pet. ii. 1). What men seem to be, what men claim to be, what men are commonly recognised as being, is fairly quoted as an aggravation of their guilt.—**They have done despite to** (have insulted) **the Spirit of grace**—the Holy Spirit, the Giver of grace. To contemn mercy and holiness, to return insult to Him who gives them grace, is the sin of sins, for which, as the man has gone back to his old state, and continues in it, there can be no forgiveness; as in a previous passage we have learned that neither is there renewal (cp. vi. 6).

Ver. 30. **For.** This punishment is certain, and is fulfilled and executed by God Himself. The first quotation in this verse follows neither the Hebrew nor the Greek text, but is the exact rendering adopted by Paul in Rom. xii. 19. The second is taken from Deut. xxxii. 36, and from the Psalms. The Hebrew of the word 'judge' has two meanings—to exercise judgment in punishing others, and to exercise judgment on behalf of others. The second sense may be seen in Ps. lxxxii. 3, 4 (compare margin), Ps. xliii. 1, 1 Sam. xxiv. 12, 15, and is appropriate to the passage in Deut. xxxii. 35, 36, as well as here. He will execute judgment on behalf of His people, and against those who become traitors and blasphemers. God is Judge, is the first truth; and His judgment will be executed, is the second.

Ver. 31. **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.** His hands represent His power for work, whether in love or in **wrath.** To fall into His hands in faith is to have **peace**; but to fall into His hands in punishment is **dreadful.**

Vers. 32–39. The argument now takes a **turn,** as in chap. vi. 9. The writer hopes better **things.** He bids them to remember again and again their earlier struggles and their hope of a blessed reward (vers. 32–34). He exhorts them not to give up their confidence (ver. 35), which needs patient waiting for God (ver. 36); the time required for it, indeed, is short (ver. 37), though it requires faith and stedfastness (ver. 38). To those who owe their all to faith, and who mean, God helping them, still to believe, and so to secure their souls from the ruin that will otherwise overtake them, he affirms they belong (ver. 39).

Ver. 32. **Call to remembrance** (rather, call up and keep in remembrance) **those former days in which, when first enlightened** (as in chap. vi. 4), **ye endured,** without losing heart or hope (so the word implies), **a great fight** (a manifest struggle) **of suffering,** *i.e.* consisting in suffering, not with suffering as your foe (ver. 34, where it is said that they suffered with those that were bound).

Ver. 33. **Partly in that ye became a spectacle of shame**—'a theatrical spectacle'—a term taken from those who were exposed in the theatre to shameful punishment (1 Cor. iv. 11)—**in the scornful taunts** (you suffered) **and in active persecution, and partly in that ye became partakers** (partners) **with those who were living and suffering in this way.** The word 'living' is not passive, but is repeatedly found in the Epistles to describe the actual condition of a man's life (chap. xiii. 18; 2 Cor. i. 12; 1 Tim. iii. 15). Such 'reproach and affliction' is recorded in Acts v. 18, 40, and viii. 3, and xi. 19, and xxii. 19, and xxvi. 10, 11, and in the history of Paul himself (Acts xxi. 27). All those instances must have been familiar to Hebrew believers.

Ver. 34. **For ye had compassion upon those who were in bonds, and ye also took joyfully the spoiling** (the plundering) **of your goods, knowing that ye have yourselves**—or for yourselves—the alternate reading ('in yourselves') **is** certainly wrong, and 'in heaven' is probably wrong, though it makes a good sense, and is implied in the shorter reading—**a better and an abiding substance** (possession. Compare Acts iv. 32; Luke xii. 15, where a form of the same word is used).

Ver. 35. **Cast not away, therefore, your confidence** (the faith and hope and boldness with which you confessed Christ, and) **which hath** (hath this quality—is among the things that have) **a great recompense of reward.**

Ver. 36. **For ye have need of patience**—an emphatic word; when used in relation to suffering, it describes the patient endurance which bears all with stedfastness and hope; when used in relation to active work, it describes the 'patient continuance in well-doing' (Rom. ii. 7) which endures (a form of the same word) to the end; the former is the commoner meaning, and both

seem to be combined in this passage — **that ye may do the will of God and receive the promise.** The doing and the receiving are not separated in time; the one crowns the other. 'The promise' means the promised reward, which in a sense is already yours; but the full possession is still future, and the present enjoyment broken and imperfect. Hence the need of patience and faith, as is shown by Old Testament teaching.

Ver. 37. **For yet a very little while**—a phrase that is taken from the Greek of Isa. xxvi. 20, where it is translated, in E. V., 'for a little moment' (literally, for a little time, how little).—**He that cometh**—'He that is to come'—'the coming One'—the name of Christ under both economies—He was called 'the coming One,' and He is so still. The prophecy is taken from Habakkuk, where it refers to the vision of the fall of the Chaldean monarchy, a type for the time of a great persecuting power, and of the setting up in immediate sequence (as is common in prophecy) of the Divine kingdom.—**Will come —though it tarry, wait for it.** The Greek of the Septuagint makes the object of the vision a person, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes the person the Messiah. The day of Jehovah in the one covenant becomes the day of the Lord in the other.

Ver. 38. **But** (or now) **my righteous one** (he who belongs to God's people) **by faith shall live.** As it is by faith he first gets life (as is told us in Rom. i. 16, 17, and Gal. iii. 11), so it is by faith that life is preserved in the midst of judgments and of delays that are incident to them.—**But if he** (A. V. 'any man')—Owen and Gill, Winer and De Wette, prefer 'he,' which is simpler and in harmony with the context; the same person is described in the two clauses—**draw back**—the rendering of the Septuagint adopts apparently a different reading of the Hebrew text, as it does to a small extent in the following clause. The reference of those two clauses to the same person need create no difficulty. The apostasy of a professed Christian is always possible, or warnings would be needless: not necessarily the apostasy of a true Christian. The perseverance of the elect is one thing; the perseverance of a particular person is to us another.

Ver. 39. **But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition** (destruction, Rom. ix. 22; Phil. i. 28, iii. 19, etc.), **but of them that believe.** 'We'—the writer again includes himself with them as true believers, though subject to the same law as here is applied to his own case ('I keep my body under, lest, having preached the Gospel to others, I should be myself rejected'). 'That draw back'—'that believe'—each expression describes a quality or character which originates in apostasy or faith respectively. We are not of the character that drawing back produces; we are of the character that faith produces.—**Unto the saving of the soul.** This last phrase is very striking—the gaining of possession of the soul. As the backslider loses his soul,—gets, instead of eternal life, never-ending death, which yet is not annihilation,—so the man of faith wins back his soul from impending perdition, gains a possession that is truly his. The man who is not God's is not even his own; his entire personality is the slave and the property of another.

CHAPTER XI. 1–38.

Reasons for Faith.—The Nature, Objects, and Necessity of Faith.—Its Utility, Power, and Blessedness illustrated, xi. 1–38.

1 NOW faith is the substance[1] of things hoped for, the evi-
2 dence[2] [a]of things not seen. For [b]by[3] it the elders
3 obtained a good report.[4] Through[5] faith we understand that [c]the worlds were[6] framed by the word of God, so that things
4 which are seen were not[7] made of things which do appear. By faith [d]Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying[8] of his gifts: and by[9] it he being dead [e]yet speaketh.
5 By faith [f]Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony,[10] that he pleased[11] God.

[a] Rom viii. 24, 25; 2 Cor. iv. 18, v. 7.
[b] Ver. 39.
[c] Gen. i. 1; Ps. xxxiii. 6; Jo. i. 3; ch. i. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 5.
[d] Gen. iv. 4; 1 Jo. iii. 12.
[e] Gen. iv. 10; Mat. xxiii. 35; ch. xii. 24.
[f] Gen. v. 22, 24.

[1] *or*, confidence (*as in* iii. 14), *lit.* substance, *or*, what gives substance to
[2] proof [3] in [4] *i.e.* testimony, *or*, witness (*as in ver.* 4)
[5] By (*as in vers.* 4, 5) [6] have been
[7] *read*, what is seen, *and tr.* hath not been
[8] bearing witness. *Three ancient MSS. read*, he bare witness to God
[9] through [10] hath this witness [11] hath pleased

6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him:* for he that
cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder
7 of them that diligently seek[15] him. By faith [e] Noah, being
warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear,[16]
[h] prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by [g] the which he
condemned the world, and became heir[14] of [i] the righteousness
8 which is by[16] faith. By faith [k] Abraham, when he was called
to go[16] out into a place which he should after[17] receive for an
inheritance,[18] obeyed;[19] and he went out, not knowing whither
9 he went. By faith he sojourned[20] in the land of promise, as *in*
a [l] strange country,[21] [m] dwelling in tabernacles[22] with Isaac and
10 Jacob, [n] the heirs[23] with him of the same promise: for he
looked for [o] a city which hath foundations,[24] [p] whose builder and
11 maker *is* God. Through[25] faith also [q] Sara herself received
strength to conceive seed, and [r] was delivered of a child when
she was past age, because she judged[26] him [s] faithful who had
12 promised. Therefore[27] sprang there even[28] of one, and [t] him
as good as dead, [u] *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude,
13 and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable. These
all died in[29] faith, [v] not having received the promises, but
[w] having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*,[30] and
embraced *them*,[31] and [x] confessed that they were strangers and
14 pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things [y] declare
15 plainly[32] that they seek a country.[33] And truly, if they had
been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they
16 might have had opportunity to have returned.[34] But now
they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore
God is not ashamed[35] [z] to be called their God: for [a] he hath
17 prepared for them a city. By faith [b] Abraham, when he was
tried,[36] offered[37] up Isaac: and he that had received the
18 promises [c] offered[38] up his only begotten *son*, of whom[39] it was
19 said, [d] That in[40] Isaac shall thy seed be called:[41] accounting
that God [e] *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from
20 whence also he received him in a figure.[42] By faith [f] Isaac

[e] Gen. vi. 14, 22.
[h] 1 Pet. iii. 20.
[g] Rom. iii. 22, iv. 13; Phil. iii. 9.
[i] Gen. xii. 1, 4; Acts vii. 2, 3, 4.
[k] Gen. xxiii. 4; Acts vii. 6.
[l] Gen. xii. 8, xiii. 3, 18, xviii. 1, 9.
[m] Ch. vi. 17.
[n] Ch. xii. 22, xiii. 14.
[o] Ch. iii. 4; Rev. xxi. 2, 14.
[p] Gen. xvii. 19, xviii. 11, 14, xxi. 2.
[q] See Lu. i. 36.
[r] Rom. iv. 22; ch. x. 23.
[s] Is. li. 1, 2; Rom. iv. 19.
[t] Gen. xxii. 17, xxxii. 12; Rom. iv. 18.
[u] Ver. 39.
[v] Ver. 27; Jo viii. 56.
[w] Gen. xxiii. 4, xlvii. 9; 1 Chron. xxix. 15; Ps. xxxix. (xxxviii.) 12, cxix. 19; 1 Pet. i. 17, ii. 11.
[x] Ch. xiii. 14.
[y] Gen. xxviii. 13; Ex. iii. 6, 15; Mat. xxii. 32; Acts vii. 32.
[z] Phil. iii. 20; ch. xiii. 14.
[a] Gen. xxii. 1, 6, Heb.
[b] Jas. ii. 21.
[c] Gen. xxi. 12; Rom. ix. 7.
[d] Rom. iv. 17, 19, 21.
[e] Gen. xxvii. 27, 39.
[f]

[15] *rather*, seek after
[16] according to
[17] was to
[18] *i.e.* a possession
[19] *omit*, *see note* 16
[20] *i.e.* a temporary dweller in
[21] land that belonged to another
[22] *lit.* having his home in tents
[23] possessors
[24] *lit.* the city which hath the foundations
[25] By
[26] deemed (*as in* x. 29)
[27] Wherefore also
[28] *omit* even
[29] according to (*as in note* 15), *i.e.* as men die who had not received the promises, but believed in them
[30] *omit* and were persuaded of *them*
[31] *read*, having seen them from afar and greeted them
[32] make it plain
[33] are seeking after a home (a fatherland) of their own
[34] to return
[35] *insert* of them
[36] while tried
[37] *lit.* hath offered up
[38] *or*, was offering
[39] *or*, he to whom
[40] *or*, In *simply*
[41] *lit.* In Isaac shall a seed be called to thee
[42] he did in a figure receive him

21 blessed[43] Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith
Jacob, when he was a dying, [g] blessed both[44] the sons of
Joseph; and [h] worshipped, *leaning* upon the top of his staff.
22 By faith [i] Joseph, when he died,[45] made mention of the depart-
ing[46] of the children of Israel; and gave commandment con-
23 cerning his bones. By faith [k] Moses, when he was born, was
hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was* a
proper[47] child; and they were not afraid of the king's [l] com-
24 mandment. By faith [m] Moses, when he was come to years,[48]
25 refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [n] choosing
rather to suffer affliction[49] with the people of God, than to
26 enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming[50] [o] the
reproach of Christ[51] greater riches than the treasures in[52]
Egypt: for he had respect unto[53] [p] the recompence of the
27 reward. By faith [q] he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of
the king: for he endured, as [r] seeing him who is invisible.
28 Through[54] faith [s] he kept[55] the passover, and the sprinkling of
blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.
29 By faith [t] they passed through the Red sea as by dry *land:*[56]
30 which the Egyptians assaying to do[57] were drowned. By faith
[u] the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed
31 about seven days. By faith [v] the harlot Rahab perished not
with them that believed not,[58] when [w] she had received[59] the
32 spies with peace. And what shall I more say? for the time
would[60] fail me to tell of [x] Gedeon, and *of*[61] [y] Barak, and *of*[61]
[z] Samson, and *of*[61] [a] Jephthae; *of* [b] David also, and [c] Samuel,
33 and *of* the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms,
wrought righteousness, [d] obtained promises, [e] stopped the mouths
34 of lions, [f] quenched the violence[62] of fire, [g] escaped the edge of
the sword, [h] out[63] of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant
35 in fight,[64] [i] turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [k] Women
received their dead raised to life again:[65] and others were
[l] tortured,[66] not accepting deliverance;[67] that they might obtain
36 a better resurrection: and others had trial of *cruel* mockings
and scourgings, yea, moreover [m] of bonds and imprisonment:
37 [n] they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted,[68]

[43] *insert* both, *or insert* even *before* concerning
[44] each of
[45] drawing to his end
[46] *lit.* exodus
[47] goodly
[48] grown up
[49] to be evil entreated
[50] deeming
[51] *or*, the Christ
[52] *read*, of
[53] looked away to
[54] By
[55] *or*, hath made, *i.e.* instituted
[56] *read* land *in Roman type as part of the original text*
[57] *i.e.* trying to do (*lit.* of which making trial, *see the same phrase in ver.* 36)
[58] *or*, were disobedient
[59] having received (receiving as she did)
[60] will
[61] *omit* and *of*
[62] power
[63] *Gr.* from
[64] mighty in war
[65] *lit.* by a resurrection
[66] *lit.* broken on the wheel, *or*, beaten to death
[67] *lit.* redemption, *i.e.* deliverance at the price [of principle]
[68] *Tischendorf suggests* pierced, *or*, burnt

[g] Gen. xlviii. 5, 16, 20.
[h] Gen. xlvii. 31.
[i] Gen. l. 24, 25; Ex. xiii. 19
[k] Ex. ii. 2; Acts vii. 20.
[l] Ex. i. 16, 22.
[m] Ex. ii. 11.
[n] Ps. lxxxiv. 10.
[o] Ps. lxxxix. (lxxxviii.) 50, etc., lxix. (lxviii.) 9; ch. xiii. 13.
[p] Ch. x. 35.
[q] Ex. x. 28, 29, xii. 37, xiii 17, 18.
[r] Ver. 13.
[s] Ex. xii. 21, etc.
[t] Ex. xiv. 22, 29; Isa. xliii. 16, 17, li. 9, 10
[u] Josh. vi. 20.
[v] Josh. ii. 9, 11, vi. 23; Jas. ii. 25.
[w] Josh. ii. 1.
[x] Judg. vi. 8.
[y] Judg. iv. 6, 9.
[z] Judg. xiii. 16.
[a] Judg. xi. 1, xii. 7.
[b] 1 Sam. xvi. 1, 13, xvii. 45
[c] 1 Sam. i. 20, xii. 20.
[d] 2 Sam. vii. 11, etc.
[e] Judg. xiv. 5, 6; 1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35; Dan. vi. 22.
[f] Dan. iii. 25.
[g] 1 Sam. xx. 1; 1 Kin. xix. 3; 2 Kin. vi. 16.
[h] 2 Kin. xx. 7, etc.; Job xlii. 10; Ps. vi. 8.
[i] Judg. xv. 8, 15; 1 Sam. xiv. 13, etc., xvii. 51, 52; 2 Sam. viii. 1, etc.
[k] 1 Kin. xvii. 22; 2 Kin. iv. 35.
[l] Acts xxii. 25.
[m] 1 Kin. xxii. 26; 2 Chron. xvi. 10; Jer. xx. 2, xxxii. 2, 3, xxxvii. 15.
[n] 1 Kin. xxi. 13; 2 Chron. xxiv. 21; Mat. xxi. 35; Acts vii. 58, xiv. 19.

were slain with the sword: [e] they wandered[69] about [f] in sheep-
38 skins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;[70] (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and [g] *in* dens and caves[71] of the earth.

[e] 2 Kin. i. 8; Mat. iii. 4. [f] Zech. xiii. 4. [g] 1 Kin. xviii. 4, xix. 9.

[69] went (*not the same word as in ver.* 38) [70] evil entreated (*as in* xiii. 3)
[71] and caves and in holes

CHAP. XI. 1. Having affirmed that our distinguishing quality as Christians is not apostasy, but faith, and that the issue in our case is not perdition, but the gaining of that life of the soul which apostasy threatens, he now proceeds to show that faith is the quality of the spiritual life. This faith means the belief of things still future; such belief as makes them realities to us: and the evidence of things unseen, such evidence as answers objections and produces conviction (compare Aristotle's definition of ἔλεγχος). It means, among other things, patient waiting, heroic suffering, and is illustrated by reference to the lives and history of men of all ages and of every economy. The words of this verse have sometimes been regarded as a definition of faith, or as a description of it; but properly they are no definition, for the terms of each proposition are not interchangeable; nor are they a description; they rather seize upon one quality of faith which is most appropriate for the writer's purpose, and help us to understand what faith is by calling attention to properties not peculiar to it, but still deeply significant. Faith, then, has to do with what is future and is an object of hope, viz. blessing and reward. More widely, it has to do with what is unseen, whether in the future, the present, or the past. Similarly the **things** which it believes are either historical facts, as 'things' means in chap. vi. 18, or spiritual realities, as 'things' means in chap. x. 1. If they are future and are objects of desire, they are *hoped for;* and if they are not objects of hope, but still believed, they are things unseen. *All* are unseen, whether hoped for or not. So the last clause of the verse describes the wider class. Faith gives weight and force to what would be otherwise unsubstantial; and faith is itself, in an important sense, a proof of the truth of what it believes. The feeling of the solid body which the hand sustains is itself a proof that the body is solid. The consciousness of the light is decisive evidence that the sun has risen—not to others, but to the man himself.

Ver. 2. **For in it.** In just such and no other faith all the heroes of the older economy were testified of, and **obtained** a [good] **report**—became, through their stedfastness and amid inferior means of grace, examples to the younger generation, ourselves (see ver. 40). The forms of expression used to describe a life of faith are all instructive. Here it is 'in it,' as the region or state in which the good report and testimony was gained; later it is 'by it' (vers. 3, 4, 5, etc.); 'through it,' as the instrument—calling attention not to 'it,' but to some living force which is behind it (ver. 33); 'in accordance with it,' *i.e.* in such a way as faith requires or prompts (vers. 7, 13). All those phrases are common in Paul's writings—'out of faith'—*i.e.* having its origin in faith, another of Paul's expressions, is also found (chap. x. 38).

Ver. 3. Here begin the examples of the power and nature and effects of faith. **By faith we know that the worlds** (the universe) **have been framed by the word of God.** 'The worlds'—all that exists in time and space, including time and space themselves (see note on chap. i. 2). 'Have been framed'—the reference is to the preparation and completing of the world according to the design of the Founder. The word is translated 'established' in Ps. lxxxix. 37—'prepared' in Ps. lxxiv. 16. 'By the word of God;' *i.e.* His command. The explanation is found in Gen. i., where nine times we read, 'God said' . . . 'and it was so.' It is by faith we understand that God made the universe. The word 'understand' describes the rational or spiritual act of thought whereby things come to be known: that things had an origin, that they did not originate themselves, that they had an originator whose ability, intelligence, and goodness correspond to the qualities which we see in them, are conclusions to which our rational and spiritual nature lead us (as we are told in Rom. i. 20). The conclusions are of the nature of faith; for the process was unseen, and the conclusions are rather to be believed than demonstrated. When the announcement is made, however, and we believe it, the mystery is comparatively solved; an adequate cause is assigned, and we form a conception of the origin of things which commends itself to our 'noetic faculty,' or perceptive understanding, as certainly as it commends itself to our religious instinct. Faith, therefore, the belief in the unseen, is as certainly a principle of natural religion, in its rudimentary form at least, as it is of revealed religion. It suggests the solution of many problems. Without it the world itself, in its origin and destiny, is a deep mystery, a maze without a plan.—**So that what is seen** (the true reading, the visible universe as a whole, not many separate things) **was not made** (hath not come to be) **out of the things which appear.** Creation abounds in change and in development—the plant comes from the seed, and each man from the race that precedes him; but the understanding of faith leads us to the conclusion that at the beginning it was not so. The series is not eternal or self-created; God Himself is the Creator, and to Him and to His word the visible creation is to be ascribed. The clause 'so that,' etc., may mean the tendency of the arrangement; the arrangement itself leads to the conclusion; or it may describe the purpose of the Creator, 'in order that' what is seen might be understood to have come from what does not appear—viz., from the Divine mind and plan; but the interpretation given above is the more simple and natural.

Ver. 4. **A more excellent sacrifice**—partaking more of the quality of a true sacrifice with reference to what constitutes its excellence. Cain offered of his fruits what came first to hand; Abel offered of the firstlings of his flock, the choicest and best. Cain expressed at most his thankfulness, and that not hearty or profound; Abel's faith showed itself in acknowledging his sin and in laying hold of the Divine mercy in the midst of what he felt to be deserved wrath; and thus his offering was a true sacrifice.—**By which** (faith) **it was witnessed of him** (the same word is in ver. 2) **that he was righteous.** Witnessed by our Lord (Matt. xxiii. 35), and later by John (1 John iii. 12), but chiefly by God Himself, as the following clause shows:—**God himself testifying of his gifts** (the very expression in Gen. iv. 4)—probably as God testified in other cases (Ex. xiv. 24; 1 Kings xviii. 24, 38), by consuming and accepting the sacrifice.—**And by it** (still his faith) **he being dead** (having died), **yet speaketh** (the active voice is the true reading). But how? Partly perhaps to us by way of encouragement and example; but as a similar phrase is used in chap. xii. 24 of the blood of Abel as speaking unto God, it seems at least to be part of the meaning here that through the faith and the offerings of Abel, Abel, the first martyr, lives on after death: through his faith he still speaks to God; even as Enoch still lives, who never died at all.

Vers. 5, 6. **By faith Enoch was translated.** The language of this verse is taken from the Septuagint (Gen v. 22–24). 'He was not' is there rendered 'he was not found.' The phrase 'God took him' is translated 'God translated him;' changed corruption into incorruption, the natural body into the spiritual. The Hebrew phrase, 'he walked with God,' which probably had no clear meaning to a Greek, the Septuagint renders 'he pleased God,' or strove to please Him; he lived a life well-pleasing to Him. Nothing is said in the Old Testament of his faith; but before his translation is recorded, it is recorded that 'he pleased God;' and now the writer proceeds to show that faith was the foundation of his God-accepted life.

Ver. 6. But faith is essential to our well-pleasing, and therefore Enoch had faith. Without faith there is a double difficulty; there is no complacency on the side of God, who regards the impenitent and unbelieving man as a sinner, and on the side of man there is no trust. The logical proof of the need of this faith is that whoever draws nigh to God to serve Him, or hold communion with Him (see chap. vii. 19–25, ix. 14), must believe (1) that He *is* a reality towards whom he stands in closest relation of love and duty, and (2) that to those who seek Him He becomes (not *will* become) the bestower of a full reward. God's being is a thing not seen, His reward a thing hoped for; faith an assured conviction of the first, and a solid expectation of the second.

Ver. 7. Three antediluvians are named—Abel, the penitent and martyr; Enoch, the prophet (Jude 14, 15) and saint; and now is introduced Noah, the righteous and perfect man—the first man to whom this title is applied (Gen. vi. 9, compare Ezek. xiv. 14–20). **Being warned of God** (having received a Divine admonition) . . . **moved with godly fear.** The word thus rendered is a form of the expression found in chap. v. 7. Its meaning depends in part upon the context, and varies from (mere prudence) the fear that excites careful forethought (Acts xxiii. 10) to the filial reverence of our Lord Himself. Here reverence for God, or what is practically the same thing, for the message that was given to him, best suits the passage. The rendering, taking forethought (Delitzsch, Alford), separates the quality from the faith, and describes worldly caution rather than Christian grace. When things unseen and fearful are revealed, faith believes them, and fears accordingly. Faith works by fear in such cases, as it works by love.—**By which faith he condemned the world**—not by the ark (Chrysostom, Calvin, etc.); though this is true: only it is feeble, and it is of faith the whole chapter treats—**by which faith, as shown in this way,** is, however, the full thought. He condemned the world, showing how the world ought to have regarded the warnings God gave, and how guilty they were in disregarding them. The penitence, faith, and holiness of godly men all condemn their opposites, and excite the hatred of bad men on that ground.—**And became heir** (possessor) **of the righteousness which is according to faith**—the righteousness which owes its quality, as it owes its origin, to faith. All these expressions are intensely Pauline; and it is instructive also to note that the great doctrine of righteousness by faith, which is not the main subject of the Epistle, must have been familiar to all its readers.

Vers. 8–22. From the elders of the antediluvian world the writer now appeals to the elders of Israel, the great men who, under God, founded the Jewish state. Theirs also was a condition of patient trust, and ultimately of blessed reward.

Ver. 8. **By faith Abraham, when being called**—the reading, *he who is called*, has less authority than the common text, though it makes a good sense—'he who is called the father of nations'—**obeyed and went;** his confidence showing itself in this way.—**And he went out, not knowing whither** (where) **he was going.** When Abraham left Chaldea he had no promise; that was given afterwards in Canaan (Gen. xii. 7). In Noah faith showed its power by the feeling it produced; in Abraham by obedience. It works, if it be true, now through feeling,—fear, love; and now in an obedient life.

Ver. 9. By faith he received the promise, and still waited for the fulfilment of it. **By faith he sojourned** (a temporary resident only) **in the land of promise** (which God had given him) **as** (if it were) **another's** (and not his own), **having his home in tents**—tents without foundation—pitched to-day, struck to-morrow. His whole life, therefore, was a life of promise unfulfilled, and so of patient waiting for God's time and at God's disposal.

Ver. 10. **For** (the reason of his being a sojourner only) **he looked,** or waited, **for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder** (the word implies the skill employed in building—the skill of the architect who forms the plan, as the following word implies rather the labour of erecting it) **and Maker is God.** The contrast here is first between tents, which are easily removed, and a permanent home, and then between an earthly tent and the city of the living God, of which we read in chap. xii. 22 and chap. xiii. 14. Abraham's faith

looked forward to a home for himself and his descendants in Canaan, in the earthly Jerusalem, with its foundations in the holy mountains (Ps. lxxxvii.); and then, beyond Canaan and his mortal life, to the heavenly reality, of which Jerusalem was the type—a double Jerusalem, the one below and the other above; of which Jews had some knowledge, and devout Jews had strong hope, long before the Gospel had thrown fuller light upon these themes.

Ver. 11. And what is true of Abraham, the father of the faithful, is true also of Sarah, who was equally the ancestor of the chosen race. **Sarah herself**, not 'who had so long doubted' (Bleek, etc.), for the writer is not dealing with the difficulty of faith, but with the necessity for it. The expression is nothing but an extension of the lesson of the previous verse to a new and connected instance:—Sarah likewise. The expression is very common in Luke.—**And when she was past age** (literally, 'and that contrary to the time of life')—an additional difficulty; and yet, in spite of her barrenness, her age, her former incredulity (for she had laughed at the promise in the first instance), she believed, and therein found a large reward.—**Deeming** (as in chap. x. 29 and xi. 26, and to be distinguished from the 'accounting' of ver. 19) **him faithful.**

Ver. 12. **Wherefore also** (a common Pauline expression, Rom. iv. 22 and xv. 22, etc.) **from one** (the emphatic part) **sprang there**, etc.—from a single, nay a lifeless, source sprang there a race like the dust of the earth (Gen. xiii. 16), the stars of the heaven, the sand on the lip (the margin) of the sea, innumerable; and through faith Abraham became the father and Sarah the mother of them all.

Vers. 13–16. The one attribute of the faith of all these men is that it continued till death. **In faith** (rather, consistently with it, still looking forward to a glorious future as yet unrealized).—**These all** (from Abraham downwards, as is clear from ver. 15) **died as not having received the promises** (often repeated, and containing blessings of many kinds—hence the plural; the promises which they did not receive are the 'things promised,' as in chap. ix. 15 and Acts i. 4), **but as having seen them from afar, and greeted** (or saluted) **them, and having confessed**, as Abraham did, and Jacob (see references). They saw their home all through their lives; and even when they were dying they saw their homes from afar, and greeted them 'though distant still.'

Ver. 14. **For** (they proved that they lived and died in faith) **they who say of themselves that they are sojourners** (Gen. xxiii. 4)—of their life that it is a pilgrimage (Gen. xlvii. 9), a wandering in a foreign land, make it plain that it is a fatherland, a true home, they are seeking, and not the home they have left in the country of Terah, or elsewhere.

Ver. 15. **And if indeed they were thinking of** (or mentioning, as in ver. 22) **that home whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to return.**

Ver. 16. **But now** (the case is that, see chap. viii. 6) **they desire a better, that is, a heavenly** (home); **wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God.** Of old He honoured them as His friends; Himself added to names which describe His essential nature, His being, and His almightiness, the surname 'the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob;' acknowledged it when given to Him by the patriarchs (Gen. xxxii. 9); and now He acknowledges the same name, and acknowledges the continuance of the same relation (the force of the present tense), showing their continued life and His own continued favour; and the proof of all (partly perhaps the reason but rather the proof) is that He prepared for them a permanent home above—not a tent but a city of His—and welcomed them there. Whether all this was foreseen by the patriarchs has been much questioned. There may be a fulness of meaning here which the patriarchs did not reach; but in substance they believed that the promise given them was the promise of a future home, a promise connected in part with an earthly heritage; but their desire was for the presence and blessing of Him who was their trust, and with whom they hoped to be when their earthly pilgrimage was ended. Less than that fails to explain the language of the Old Testament, as it fails to recognise the clear teaching of the New.

Ver. 17. Thus they lived and died. The writer now returns to particular instances, in order to illustrate not the final results, but the power and heroic deeds of the faith which was thus honoured. **By faith Abraham being tried** (his trials were long continued), **hath offered up** (the purpose of his heart was complete, and has abiding results) **Isaac; and** (intensive—nor only Abraham, Isaac, but—yea) **he that had gladly received** (literally, accepted, welcomed as with open arms) **the promises was offering up his only-begotten son.** The tense now recalls attention to the literal fact; the work was begun—a marvellous act of faith; it was against nature—nay, even against what seemed the Divine purpose; for it was through this son the nations were to be blessed.

Ver. 18. **Even he to whom** ('whom' refers in the Greek to Abraham, not to Isaac, and therefore it is 'to whom,' not with respect to (of) whom) **it was said, In Isaac** (through and in descent from him) **shall there be named to thee a seed**—only his descendants shall be (and shall be known as) Abraham's seed. To be called, is generally used in Scripture with one of two senses,—'to have the name,' or really to be. Sometimes, as here, the two senses are combined.

Ver. 19. And the reason was that he reckoned the faithfulness of God to be safe in the keeping of His almightiness; he believed that God would keep His word, even if it was necessary for Him to effect a resurrection from the dead. The statement is quite general; and, though applied to Isaac by implication, it is a universal truth. **Whence**—and from the dead he did receive him back (used of captives delivered—of hostages sent home), not in a literal resurrection indeed, but in what was an equivalent; the father's heart was as resigned, and the bitterness of the separation was as complete. Whether this is all has been much disputed. Perhaps 'in a figure' has a further reference to 'the ram' which was offered in his stead—the victim of God's providing, while the son was set free; or possibly the whole transaction may be a figure of the death and resurrection of our Lord.

Ver. 20. Nor is faith restricted to trial; it realizes blessing also. **By faith Isaac blessed**

Jacob (the heir of the greater promise) **and Esau too** (the two articles of the original call attention to distinct acts) **even concerning things to come** —the act of faith and of prophetic faith. The blessing and the prayer of faith, proceeding as they do from a mind instructed by the Divine mind, and from a will in harmony with the Divine will, bind even God, and control the future destinies of him on whose behalf they are offered.

Ver. 21. **By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph.** The dying acts of the two patriarchs are connected together as worshippers (Gen. xlvii. 31).—**He worshipped on the top of his staff.** The history explains this allusion. Jacob had arranged with his son for his own burial in the distant land of Canaan (itself an act of faith), recognising in Canaan the future home of his posterity. When Joseph had given the promise, Jacob showed the energy of his faith by the energy of his thankfulness. Though dying, he rose in his bed, leaned on his staff (the staff, perhaps, of which he spoke long before, Gen. xxxii. 10), and bowed in worship (this is the meaning of the Hebrew, Gen. xlviii. 2) to the God who had now fulfilled all his desires. The same word (written 'staff') means, with other vowel pointing, 'bed;' and, as the older Hebrew text had no vowel points, the Septuagint has one rendering and the English version of the Old Testament another. The writer adopts the version of the Septuagint. If the English version be retained, it means that he worshipped, leaning on (with his face towards) the bed. (See Isa. xxxviii. 2.)

Ver. 22. This dying act of Jacob's recalls the like faith of Joseph. **By faith Joseph, when drawing to his end, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel,** and made his brethren swear that his bones should rest in the land of promise; an expression at once of his faith and of his love for those who were the heirs of that promise. Centuries later Moses carried his bones out of Egypt (Ex. xiii. 19), and the burial of them in Shechem is recorded in the closing verses of the Book of Joshua. All this had deeper meaning. He would be buried where they were buried, because is God was their God.

Ver. 23. Thus far the writer has been dealing with examples of faith in Genesis alone. The examples are few compared with all recorded in that book, but they are very striking and noble. The history and character of Moses naturally occupy a chief place in the following verses. From the first he was a child of faith. His parents hid him three months, noting his comeliness (Acts vii. 20), and hoping apparently that God might use him as He had used Joseph, to be the deliverer of their people. They therefore disregarded the king's ordinance, and did their duty, looking for Divine succour.

Vers. 24–28. Mark the successive expressions of his faith. When he was grown up he refused the name and dignity of a member of the royal family, preferring to suffer with the people of God rather than enjoy, with godless, idolatrous Egyptians, such fleeting pleasures as sin provides. **Deeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of Egypt.** The reproach which typical Israel suffered is called the reproach of Christ; as Paul calls the sufferings of Christians the sufferings of Christ (Col. i. 24; 2 Cor. i. 5), *i.e.* of Christ dwelling and suffering in His Church as in His body. In the true Church of every age the eternal Christ ever lives and reigns, though when Moses suffered He was still to come, appearing chiefly in the types and prophecies, while really dwelling among them. And the reason is that he looked away from the suffering to the Divine reward, his life and acts being moulded and guided by his hopes. — **By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.** The reference here has been supposed to be to his flight into Midian after the slaughter of an Egyptian; but then it is said that he *did fear* (Ex. ii. 14). The natural explanation is that the words describe his abandonment of all his Egyptian hopes (not that he fled from Egypt, but gave it up), not fearing the wrath which the desertion of his post, and the bitter feeling of Pharaoh against the people whom he was joining would certainly excite.—**For he endured** (he was stedfast) **as seeing him who is invisible,** or, **the king who is invisible** (1 Tim. i. 17). The wrath of an earthly sovereign was nothing to him, when assured of the grace and protection of the King of kings.—'**By faith he hath kept the Passover,**' *i.e.* he celebrated it, as the verb always means, and instituted it, as the sense rather implies. Both thoughts seem to be here. 'By faith,' because he believed that the destroyer would pass over and not hurt the chosen people, and that a complete exodus from the land of their captivity was at hand; as by faith in a coming Deliverer it was intended that it should continue to be observed.—**And the effusion of blood,** viz. on the lintel and door-posts. The effusion was made by means of a branch of hyssop, and so sprinkling has come to be a rendering of a word which properly means effusion. In this sprinkling or application of the blood lies the atoning power of the Passover, as in the case of the great Antitype; it is not the blood shed, but the blood as applied through faith, that speaks peace and secures forgiveness.

Ver. 29. That awful night is followed by a glorious deliverance. **By faith they passed through** (the verb is used of crossing in any way) **the Red Sea.** God by a strong east wind made a passage through the water, and in faith the Israelites entered **as by dry land,** assured of their safety. The Egyptians tried (either the sea or the seemingly dry land) as an uncertain experiment, and were swallowed up.

Ver. 30. The writer now leaves the Book of the Law for the Book of Joshua, the record of the conquest of the land and of the complete fulfilment of the ancient promise. **By faith** (of Joshua and the whole people, the correlative of that Divine power which really did the deed) **the walls,** etc. As the great deliverance from Egypt was effected by faith and the boldness it produced, so the first victory in Canaan was achieved by persevering faith, the wall having been compassed about for seven whole days (see Josh. vi.).

Ver. 31. Nor does previous personal character hinder its power, or previous separation from the covenant people. **By faith,** as shown in her confession, 'Jehovah is God in heaven above and in the earth beneath,' 'and He hath given you the land' (Josh. xi. 9).—**Rahab the harlot,** and a Canaanite, **perished not with** those who, having heard of God's miraculous dealings on behalf of

Israel (Josh. ii. 10), persisted in their defiance, and refused submission. Her faith showed its reality (see Jas. ii. 25) in her receiving and protecting the spies, and found its reward in her preservation, and finally in her becoming an ancestress of our Lord. 'When she had received' in the Authorised Version represents the expression of her faith (properly 'receiving as she did'), as if it were prior to the faith; it was really its result, or more properly the working of the faith itself. A careful attention to the tenses, and to the absence of the article whereby this clause is closely connected with the preceding, would be sufficient of itself to reconcile the teaching of Paul and James.

Ver. 32. **What shall I say more? for time will fail,** etc. The groups named in this verse are really two; and though there are various readings as to the connecting particles, they necessitate no change. The chronological order of the names would be, Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson; Samuel, David. Samuel is probably put last to connect his name with the prophets, to which class he belongs (see Acts iii. 23); and Gideon and Samson are probably put before Barak and Jephthah respectively, because they are of greater celebrity as men of faith. The characteristic exploits of each will be found in the passages named in the margin.

Ver. 33. **Who through faith.** The 'who' refers both to those named and to others like them; the introduction of the previous enumeration ('time will fail,' etc.) being practically a rhetorical equivalent for 'etc.' in English; and the 'through faith' applying to all that is said to the end of ver. 34. **Through faith** (not 'in' or 'according to'), the expression for the last time in this chapter, and specially appropriate as describing the instrument by which those great works were accomplished. How it sustained also in suffering is recorded in the later verses, 35–38.—**Subdued kingdoms**—true of all the judges named, as it is of Samuel and David.—**Wrought righteousness** is specially true of David, the righteous king (2 Sam. viii. 15, etc.), and of Samuel, the righteous judge (1 Sam. xii. 4).—**Obtained promises,** *i.e.* obtained the fulfilment of them, not indeed of the great promise of all (see ver. 40), but of the lesser promises which God fulfilled to the prophets themselves. Joel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, all saw the partial fulfilment of things they foretold.—**Stopped the mouths of lions**—true in part of Samuel and David, and specially of Daniel, of whom it is said that an angel shut the mouths of the lions, because he believed in his God (Dan. vi. 22, 23).

Ver. 34. **Quenched the power of fire** (not the fire, which still burnt, but the power of it); true of Shadrach and his companions.—**Escaped the edge of the sword,** as in the case of Elijah (1 Kings xix. 1, etc.), Elisha (2 Kings vi. 14, etc.), Jeremiah (Jer. xxxvi. 26, etc.).—**Out of weakness were made strong,** as in the case of Samson (Judg. xvi. 28, etc.), and David, whose most plaintive Psalms end often in thanksgiving.—**Waxed** (became) **mighty in war**—true of many heroic men under the judges and during the monarchy.—**Turned to flight the armies of the aliens**—a word used in the Septuagint of the Gentiles—true of Gideon and the Midianites, and of Jonathan and the Philistines. It is probable, however, that these last clauses, without excluding those older deeds of faith, refer mainly to the later history of Israel after the close of the Old Testament canon. They find a striking fulfilment in the Maccabæan age. It is certain that some of the sufferings spoken of in the next group of verses are found only in that age; and the expressions of ver. 34 seem taken from the First Book of the Maccabees (compare 1 Macc. iii. 3, i. 38, ii. 7, etc.). No doubt the faith of these later heroes was sometimes of a lower type, rather patriotic than theocratic, the result of a noble enthusiasm as much as of trust in the living God; but in other cases it was true and Divine; while the struggles between the holy and atheistic nations, which the book describes, seem referred to in the Book of Daniel as of the deepest interest.

Vers. 35–38. What faith has done we have seen; what it helps men to suffer is now told us. **Women received** (back) **their dead raised to life again** (literally, by a resurrection, which is regarded as the cause or origin of their so receiving them), true of the widow of Sarepta and of the Shunamite.—**And others were tortured** (broken upon the wheel). The word here used (a wheel or drum-head on which the victim was stretched and beaten to death) shows that the reference is to Eleazar (2 Macc. vi. 18–31), and the heroic mother and her seven sons mentioned in chap. vii. Fuller details of the same martyrdom are given in the so-called Fourth Book of Maccabees, sometimes, though erroneously, ascribed to Josephus.—**Not accepting** (rejecting would be more exact) the **deliverance** which was offered them at the price of their principles (so the original means), **in order that they might obtain a better resurrection** than the mere return to the present life. 'The king of the world shall raise us up,' they said, 'unto everlasting life' (2 Macc. vii. 9, etc.).

Ver. 36. **Others had trial** (experience) **of cruel mockings and scourgings.** The allusion again is to the Maccabees (2 Macc. vii. 7–10).—**Yea, moreover** (a harder thing, because of the continuance and depressing influence of it), **of bonds of imprisonment**—perhaps with reference to Jonathan (1 Macc. xiii. 12), or to Hanani, Micaiah, and especially to Jeremiah (see references).

Ver. 37. **They were stoned,** as was Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, the last martyr mentioned in the Old Testament (2 Chron. xxiv. 20–22), as Abel was the first. Jeremiah is also said to have been stoned to death at Tahpanhes (Daphne) in Egypt.—**They were sawn asunder,** as was Isaiah by Manasseh.—**They were tempted.** This word reads feeble, standing as it does in the midst of three descriptions of violent death. A similar word means, 'they were burnt;' another, 'they were mutilated;' and there is evidence, though not preponderating, for the omission of it altogether. If it is genuine, 'they were experimented upon' is a possible rendering, and makes a fairly consistent sense. As it is now rendered, it means that in addition to a cruel death they were, all through, offered relief if they would only abandon their faith.—**They were slain with the sword** (literally, they died by the murder of the sword)—true of Urijah in Judah (Jer. xxvi. 23), and quite common in Israel (1 Kings xix. 10, etc.).—**They went about.** The writer now returns from the various kinds of death they suffered to their life-

long conflicts—they were wanderers, destitute, oppressed, evil entreated.

Ver. 38. . . . In caves (clefts of the mountain, ending in chambers); in holes, openings of any kind—true of Elijah at Horeb, of Elisha at Carmel, and of the prophets hidden by Obadiah.

CHAPTER XI. 39–XII. 29.

Reasons for Patience, xi. 39–xii. 11.—*Practical Exhortations enforced by the greater Excellence of the Gospel*, 12–29.

39 AND these all, [a] having obtained a good report through
40 faith,[1] received not the promise: God having provided[2]
[b] some better thing for us, that they without[3] us should not be
[c] made perfect.

CHAP. XII. 1. Wherefore, seeing we also are[4] compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, [d] let us[4] lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and [e] let us run [f] with
2 patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith; [g] who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and [h] is set
3 down[5] at the right hand of the throne of God. [i] For consider him that endured[6] such contradiction of sinners against him-
4 self,[7] [k] lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.[8] [l] Ye have
5 not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten[9] the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children,[10]

[m] My son, despise not thou[11] the chastening of the Lord,
Nor faint when thou art rebuked of[12] him:
6 For [n] whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,
And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 [o] If ye endure chastening,[13] God dealeth with you as with sons;
8 for what son is he whom the[14] father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, [p] whereof all are[15] partakers, then
9 are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*,[16] and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto [q] the
10 Father of spirits,[17] and live? For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure;[18] but he for *our* profit,
11 [r] that *we* might[19] be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: neverthe-

[a] Vers. 2, 13.
[b] Ch. vii. 22, viii. 6.
[c] Ch. v. 9, xii. 23; Rev. vi. 11.
[d] Col. iii. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 1
[e] 1 Cor. ix. 24; Phil. iii. 13, 14.
[f] Rom. xii. 12; ch. x. 36.
[g] Lu. xxiv. 26; Phil.ii.8, etc.; 1 Pet. i. 11.
[h] Ps. cx. (cix.) 1; ch. i. 3, 13, viii. 1; 1 Pet. iii. 22.
[i] Mat. x. 24, 25; Jo.xv.20.
[k] Gal. vi. 9
[l] 1 Cor. x. 13; ch. x. 32, 33, 34.
[m] Prov. iii. 11; Job v. 17.
[n] Prov. iii. 12; Ps. xciv. 12, cxix. 75; Jas. i. 12; Rev. iii. 19.
[o] Deut. viii. 5; 2 Sam. vii. 14; Prov. xiii. 24, xix. 18, xxiii. 13.
[p] Ps. lxxiii. 15; 1 Pet. v. 9.
[q] Num. xvi.22, xxvii. 16; Job xii. 10; Eccles. xii. 7; Is. xlii. 5, lvii. 16; Zech. xii. 1.
[r] Lev. xi. 44, xix. 2; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

[1] witness (*see* xii. 1), *or*, testimony through their faith
[2] *Gr.* foreseen, *or*, having looked forward to
[3] apart from
[4] let us also, seeing we are
[5] *read*, hath sat down
[6] hath endured
[7] *read*, themselves (*with*, *or* himself *in margin*). *See Num.* xvi. 38 (*Gr.* xvii. 3).
[8] *lit.* fainting in your souls
[9] *rather*, quite forgotten
[10] *or*, reasons with you as with sons
[11] treat not lightly
[12] reproved by
[13] It is for filial chastening ye endure
[14] *rather*, his, *or*, a
[15] have become
[16] as correctors
[17] *or*, of our spirits
[18] as seemed good to them
[19] *or*, may

less afterward it yieldeth [s] the peaceable fruit of righteousness
12 unto them which are[20] exercised thereby. Wherefore [t] lift up
13 the hands which hang down, and the feeble[21] knees; [u] and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be
14 turned out of the way; [v] but let it rather be healed. [w] Follow[22] peace with all *men*, and holiness,[23] [x] without which no man shall
15 see the Lord: [y] looking diligently [z] lest any man fail of the grace of God; [a] lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble
16 *you*, and thereby many[24] be defiled; [b] lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person as Esau, [c] who for one morsel of
17 meat[25] sold his[26] birthright. For ye know how that afterward, [d] when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: ([e] for he found no place of repentance,) though he sought it
18 carefully with tears. For ye are not come unto [f] the mount[27] that might[28] be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto
19 blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard [g] intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any
20 more: [29] (for they could not endure that which was commanded, [h] And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be
21 stoned, or thrust through with a dart:[30] [i] and so terrible was the sight,[31] *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)
22 but ye are come [k] unto mount Sion, [l] and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, [m] and to an innumerable
23 company[32] of angels, to the general assembly and church of [n] the firstborn, [o] which are written[33] in heaven, and to God [p] the
24 Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men [q] made perfect, and to Jesus [r] the mediator of the new covenant, and to [s] the blood[34] of sprinkling, that speaketh better things[35] [t] than *that*
25 *of* Abel.[36] See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For [u] if they escaped not who[37] refused him that spake[38] on earth, much more *shall not* we *escape*, if we turn away from him that
26 *speaketh*[39] from heaven: [v] whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, [w] Yet once more I[40] shake[41]
27 not the earth only, but also heaven. And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth [x] the removing of those things that are shaken,

[s] Jas. iii. 18.
[t] Is. xxxv. 3 (Heb.): Job iv. 3, 4.
[u] Prov. iv. 26 (Gr.).
[v] Gal vi. 1.
[w] Ps. xxxiv. (xxxiii.) 14; Rom. xii. 18, xiv. 19; 2 Tim. ii. 22.
[x] Mat. v. 8; 2 Cor. vii. 1. Eph. v. 5.
[y] 2 Cor. vi. 1.
[z] Gal v. 4.
[a] Deut. xxix. 18 (Gr. A.); ch. iii. 12.
[b] Eph. v. 3; Col. iii. 5; 1 Thes. iv. 3.
[c] Gen. xxv. 33.
[d] Gen. xxvii. 34, 36, 38.
[e] Ch. vi. 6.
[f] Deut. iv. 11, 12, v. 22: Ex. xix. 12, 18, 19, xx. 18; Rom. vi. 14, viii. 15; 2 Tim. i. 7.
[g] Ex. xix. 16, xx. 19; Deut. v. 22, 25, xviii. 16.
[h] Ex. xix. 12, 13.
[i] Deut. ix. 19.
[k] Gal. iv. 26; Rev. iii. 12, xxi 2, 10.
[l] Phil. iii. 20.
[m] Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxviii. 17; Jude 14.
[n] Ex. iv. 22; Jas. i. 18; Rev. xiv. 4.
[o] Lu. x. 20; Phil iv. 3; Rev. xiii. 8.
[p] Gen. xviii. 25; Ps. xciv. 2.
[q] Phil. iii 12; ch. xi. 40.
[r] Ch. viii. 6, ix. 15.
[s] Ex. xxiv. 8; ch. x. 22; 1 Pet. i. 2.
[t] Gen. iv. 10; ch. xi. 4.
[u] Ch. ii. 2, 3, iii. 17, x. 28, 29.
[v] Ex. xix. 18 (Heb. not Gr.).
[w] Hag. ii. 6.
[x] Ps. cii. 26; Mat. xxiv. 35; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. xxi. 1.

[20] have been [21] *Gr.* palsied [22] Follow after
[23] the holiness (*or*, sanctification) [24] the many [25] meal [26] his own
[27] *read*, a mount (*and in italics as omitted in best MSS.*) [28] could
[29] *rather*, no word more should be spoken to them
[30] *omit* or thrust through with a dart [31] *lit.* that which was made to appear
[32] *lit.* tens of thousands, *or*, innumerable hosts
[33] *lit.* 'written off,' *or*, enrolled
[34] *rather*, *as* mediator of a new covenant, and to blood
[35] *read*, better, *and omit* things
[36] *lit.* than Abel (*cf.* xi. 4)—'than the *blood of*' *is found in some MSS.*
[37] when they (*lit.* refusing as they did)
[38] *lit.* warned them (*i.e.* in God's name), *see* xi. 7 [39] *is*, or *warneth*
[40] *read*, will I [41] *not the same word*

as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be [42]
28 shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which [y] cannot be moved, let us have grace,[43] whereby we may serve
29 God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:[44] for [y] our God *is* a consuming fire.

[y] Deut. iv. 24; Ex. xxiv. 17; Deut. ix. 3; Ps. l. 3, xcvii. 3; Is. lxvi. 15; 2 Thes. i. 8; ch. x. 27.

[42] *rather*, are not [43] *or*, thankfulness [44] *read*, fear *simply*

Ver. 39. The Bible is largely a history of faith, its deeds and sufferings and rewards; pre-eminently of the patience and perseverance which belong to it, and which seem essential in a world where virtue is militant. **These all having had witness borne to them through their faith,** *i.e.* though they had all this noble attestation, had still to wait for the fulfilment of the promise—the promise of final and complete salvation (chap. ix. 15).—**God having provided,** or rather, having looked forward to, **some better thing**—that salvation which the Lord has accomplished and made known, which God reserved for our economy, and which Old Testament saints receive only when we receive it too. Our economy completes the former. To give up the Gospel and go back to the Law is to return from what is perfect to what is preparatory; and to sever ourselves from the blessedness for which the patriarchs died.

CHAP. XII. 1–11. Exhortation with encouragement and reproof, in view of all these witnesses, and of the later example of Jesus, to maintain the conflict, and to remember the love from which all discipline comes, and the fruit it is intended to produce. The chapter is introduced by a strong Pauline particle, **seeing then, therefore,** found only here and in 1 Thess. iv. 8, and by a favourite Pauline image taken from the ancient games. The figure is doubly instructive; it throws some light upon the authorship, and it illustrates the general principle that Christianity is a universal religion, using for literary purposes Hellenic materials as well as Jewish. The chief thought continues the appeal of chap. x., basing it on stronger arguments suggested in part by the eleventh chapter.—**Let us** (as well as those just named), **having about us such a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every encumbering weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience** (*i.e.* with endurance maintained through to the end) **the race that is set before us.** These are the first conditions of success. Those who were once witnesses for God, witnesses even unto blood, *martyrs* in the modern sense, now form the circle, the ring, of spectators who witness our consistency. This double meaning is certainly here; the first in the word 'witnesses,' and the second in the cloud that bends over the militant Church. The witnesses for God, whose deeds are named in the previous chapter, are also witnesses of our faithfulness and patience.

Ver. 2. Even more important than the contemplation of these martyr witnesses for maintaining the athlete spirit is the continuous **looking unto Jesus, the originator and finisher of our faith** (or **of faith**). 'Our faith' favours the interpretation that Jesus begins and completes the faith which forms the principle of the Christian life. But though this is true of Christ, as it is true of God (John xv. 16), it seems hardly the truth taught here. The faith spoken of is the faith of chap. xi., and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is quoted as the noblest example; He realized a glorious future in the midst of a troubled present, even as we must do. He is the originator of faith because He has trod the way of faith before us, and the finisher of it because having completed our salvation, which is 'the end of our faith' (1 Pet. i. 9), He leads all who trust Him to the same goal. This application of faith to Christ is not common in Scripture, but it is found in this Epistle (chap. ii. 13), and it is involved in His human nature and conflicts.—**Who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising shame.** This part of the sentence describes the life of faith, as the second describes its reward and completion.—**And hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** These two things we are to fix our gaze upon; they are closely connected in the Greek, as they are in the argument. Faith, as the realization of the unseen, was as much the principle of our Lord's life as it is the principle of the life of His followers.

Ver. 3. **For** (He suffered as well as you, therefore you may well) **consider** (properly, compare His case with your own, and gather the lessons) **him who hath endured** (it is His permanent character that is described) **such contradiction** (not in words only, but hostility of every kind, even treason (John xix. 12)) **of sinners against themselves** (*i.e.* of those who, in thus acting, sinned *against their own souls*), the other reading, 'against Himself,' has also good authority; 'themselves' suggests a fresh reason why the Hebrew Christians should not join 'a gainsaying people' by rejecting the Gospel.—**Lest ye grow weary and faint in your souls.** Still the athlete's figure. As the limbs grow faint (loose) in the race, so the soul in the Christian conflict. Principle is strengthened by thoughtfulness; for want of consideration Israel perished, as well as from want of knowledge.

Ver. 4. Special care is still needed, for there may be severer trials in store. **For not yet have ye resisted unto blood in your conflict with sin.** Here the image is changed, as in 1 Cor. ix. 24–27, from running to boxing; and the meaning is that whatever some of the Hebrew Christians had suffered (chap. xiii. 7), heavier trials might be in reserve for them. Thus the writer is addressing those who, though not without experience of severe persecution in their first love, would have secured themselves against further violence by sinful conformity. How poor our modern self-denial is, compared with what the first Christians suffered, much more when compared with the sufferings of our Lord! Happier times call for the greater voluntary consecration.

Ver. 5. **And ye have quite forgotten** (not a question, as Calvin, and Delitzsch, and others

have suggested; the fact is rather assumed in vers. 7–11; and a question, after the strong assertion of ver. 4, is unnatural); **the exhortation** (blended exhortation and comfort or consolation, which is the more common rendering: see an instance in Acts xv. 31), **which reasons with you**, etc. (both words, 'consolation' and 'reasons,' are favourite ones in describing Paul's method of teaching, consisting as it did of argument and appeal, Acts xvii. 2–17, xviii. 4, etc.). The quotation is from Prov. iii. 11, 12; and as wisdom speaks there as a person, so here the exhortation she gives is spoken of as a person addressing tender, motherly appeals to all who suffer. . . . **Nor faint when corrected by him.** The rendering of the Greek is here adopted; the Hebrew means, to resent or to murmur against. Despondency and resentment imply the same unbelief of the loving purpose of the discipline, and they express themselves in the same outward form of complaint.

Ver. 6. **Whom he receiveth**, *i.e.* whom He takes to His heart as His son. The quotation is from the Septuagint of Prov. iii. 12. The Hebrew may be rendered as in the English version ('even as a father'), or, by an alteration of the vowel points, as here, 'and scourges.' All suffering inflicted by God upon His children, or permitted, is a proof of love, and forms in itself or in its results part of the evidence of their sonship.

Ver. 7. **It is for chastening** (for filial chastening) **ye endure; as with sons God deals with you** (bears Himself towards you). The reading, 'It is for chastening—for improvement as sons ye endure,' has decisive support. It differs from the common text only by the addition of a single letter (*ως* for *υ*); and the use of the expression 'for' is quite common in this Epistle (chap. i. 14, iv. 16, vi. 16).—**For what son is he** (not 'who is a son,' or 'what sort of a son is he,' though each is a possible meaning) **whom a father** (or his father—the statement is quite general, and does not refer primarily to God) **chastises not?** Correction and chastening while character is forming is the condition of all sonship and of all true fatherhood, and our sonship in relation to God is no exception to the common law.

Ver. 8. **If ye be without** (be severed from, have no part in) **chastisement** (filial discipline), **of which all** (God's sons, or better, because of the tense, the sons mentioned in chap. xi.) **have become partakers** (or have had their share), **then are ye bastards** (of spurious parentage) **and not sons.**

Vers. 9, 10. The fatherhoods differ, and so the rule and purpose of their discipline differ also. **Furthermore, we once had fathers of our flesh** (our natural parents, and probably rather more—those who were mediately the originators of our flesh), **as chasteners** (correctors), **and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?** The contrast here is between earthly fathers, men who being flesh themselves are in a sense the creators of our flesh, and God, Himself a Spirit, and the immediate Creator of spirits. Other interpretations have been discussed in both ancient and modern times—'The Father of our spirits, *i.e.* of human souls;' 'the Father or Originator of all spiritual life.' Others think the reference is not to the origination of our nature at all, but only to parental feeling—'We have had those who, in relation to our fleshly nature, have shown a father's care; shall we not much rather submit ourselves to Him who, in relation to our spiritual nature and life, has a father's rights, and shows a father's kindness?' The ethical meaning implied in this last interpretation is implied more or less in all the others. This last suggestion will bear further illustration. The earthly discipline of nearly all nations, their Paideutics, was physical, and found its best results in physical beauty, with Apollo as its ideal, or in manly strength, with Hercules as its ideal; when it went further, and cultivated wisdom, as in Greece, or patriotism, as at Rome, or the commoner virtues, as in the model Republics of ancient or even of modern writers; it was still fleshly and secular. The Paideutique that sanctifies our higher nature is peculiar to Divine revelation, and is perfected only under the personal superintendence of the Father of spirits. The recognition of His rights, and the acceptance of His discipline, and the laying hold of His strength, are essential to it.

Ver. 10. And this deeper reverence is reasonable. **For they** (our earthly parents) **for a few days** (for the time of youth, and with special reference to it, whether successful or not, it came to an end) **chastened us according as it seemed good to them** (their rule being their own view of what was right, or sometimes their own temper or caprice); **but he for our profit** (not a question of seeming but of actual fact), **for the purpose that and to be continued until** (literally, unto) **we share in his holiness**, and then the discipline and our need for it will cease. The contrast here is perfect between seeming and reality—between their pleasure and God's noble purpose—between the few days of our youth, whether it succeed or not, and the continuance which is unbroken till the result is achieved. 'His holiness' is, no doubt, a holiness completely like His own. The original word represents it rather as a gift or a result of His discipline than of our own culture or effort (*ἁγιότης* not *ἁγιωσύνη* is found only here, compare 2 Cor. vii. 1). The word rendered 'share' or, in the English version, 'be partakers of,' is not the same word as in ver. 8. It means rather to share in what is not within our reach; it implies willing acceptance rather than personal acquisition, though shared with others, even with the blessed God Himself. He sits as a Refiner of silver, and He applies the heat and removes the refuse till He sees in it His own image.

Ver. 11. **Now no chastening** (either God's or any other) **seemeth for the present to be joyous, but grievous** (literally, a matter of joy, but of grief); **nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness** (*i.e.* righteousness is the fruit; and as the conflict is over, it is enjoyed in peace) **unto them that have been exercised thereby.** The figure of a struggle is still continued, as the original implies:

> 'Tis conflict here below,
> 'Tis triumph there and peace.'

Such is the general interpretation of the passage. The objection to it is that the last part of the verse is not true *of all chastisement*, but only of what God sends. To this objection it is replied that it is true of all chastisement, of all filial discipline, properly so called. Delitzsch prefers to regard the chastisement of ver. 11 as spoken of God's only, and then the conclusion is true as it stands. The connecting particles are affirmative in both

clauses; and the only question is how to render the first of them. 'Now' refers to chastisement generally, as distinguished from God's chastisement, which is spoken of in the previous verse. 'All chastisement from God, *however*,' represents Delitzsch's sense; whereas '*now*' better represents the sense adopted above. In either case one of the clauses needs narrowing; either the first clause means God's chastisement, or the second means that all chastisement has this beneficial result if we speak of it from its design and purpose.

The chapter is a striking lesson on 'analogy'—the word which underlies the command ('consider') with which it begins. Christ Himself (ver. 3), human institutions (the Grecian games), the common relationship of life (parents and children), are all introduced to strengthen the argument, and most impressive lessons are drawn from them all.

Vers. 12–17. Further exhortations. Ver. 12. **Wherefore** (connecting the practical appeals, as is usual in this Epistle, with the reasoning and imagery of the previous verses) **lift up** (make straight) **the hands that hang down, and the weak** (the loose or the palsied) **knees.** The figure of a race is still preserved, and perhaps of a fight also; the last requiring the strong hands, and the first firm knees; or perhaps the drooping hands and the palsied knees denote simply the complete collapse which threatened the Hebrew Christians in the race set before them.—**And make straight** (or level) **paths for your feet** (the same verb as above), **that that which is lame,** that part of the Church which is stumbling between Christianity and Judaism, may walk in plain, beaten tracks, and so **be kept from turning aside.** Some interpret 'that that which is lame may not be put out of joint'—a possible meaning of the verb. It is used, however, in the New Testament only in the pastoral Epistles, 1 Tim. i. 6, v. 15, vi. 20, 2 Tim. iv. 4, and has always the sense given to it above. Who can estimate the power of a few courageous, consistent men in any struggle, and not least in Christian churches!—**Nay, rather** than let it suffer further infirmity, as it is needlessly doing, **let it be healed.**

Meanwhile here, as in the Church at Rome, the weak, the lame, are to be treated with great forbearance, and peace is to be carefully cultivated, not division.

Ver. 14. **Follow peace with all** (believers, the true parallel being Rom. xiv. 19), **and holiness** (the appropriation by us of the Divine holiness of ver. 10; there it is the Divine attribute, here it is the process whereby the quality is made our own); **without which** (apart from which) **no man shall see the Lord**—shall not enter His presence, and share His blessedness. The reference is to God the Father. Only the holy rise to the sight of Him. The word 'Lord' is applied to Christ in chap. ii. 3, and to God in chap. viii. 2. When, however, Scripture speaks of seeing as a future reward, it is seeing God that is meant (Matt. v. 8; 1 John iii. 2); and yet as the throne of God is also the throne of the Lamb, to see one is really to see both.

Ver. 15. **Looking diligently.** The word is used generally of pastoral oversight, but is here used to enforce mutual watchfulness and discipline; a truth set forth also in chap. x. 24, iii. 12, iv. 1.—**Lest any man fail of** (come short of by wilfully relinquishing) **the grace of God.** The characteristic of the Gospel is 'grace,' apart from the works of the Law; and a man falls from it who puts himself at a distance from the blessing, and so gives it up.—**Lest any root,** or plant, of bitterness, **trouble** the sacred enclosure of the Church, **and thereby the many** (the larger part of the ground even) **be defiled** (corrupted).

Ver. 16. **Lest there be any fornicator** (taken literally, as is the uniform meaning in the New Testament except in Revelation), **or profane person** (rather, worldly person; one who has no sense of the value or glory of Divine things) **as Esau, who for a single meal sold his own birthright** (the double portion which was his share as the eldest son (Deut. xxi. 17), together with the precious inheritance of the great promise that in his seed the nations of the earth were to be blessed). These three clauses are often regarded as describing one character; but it seems better to regard them as describing three. For want of faith men give up the Gospel; for want of faith roots of bitterness spring up in the Church and defile it; and faithless persons become so selfish and so low-minded, that the smallest worldly advantages tempt them successfully to abandon their principles: and yet the course of even the least favoured of them may end in despair—

Ver. 17. **For ye know** (a fact familiar to every Hebrew) **that when afterward he was desirous of receiving the blessing** (part of his birthright, and involving the rest), **he was rejected** (rejected after trial, as the word means), by his father and by God (Gen. xxvii. 33); **for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it** (*i.e.* the blessing) **carefully and with tears.** The previous clause, 'for he found no place of repentance,' is best regarded as a parenthesis (compare chap. xii. 20 and vii. 11). The tears expressed sorrow for the loss he sustained, not for the low, sinful preference of which he had been guilty. Whose repentance did he not find? His own (as all the Greek fathers hold, with Luther, Calvin, Bengel, and Delitzsch), or his father's (as Beza, Tholuck, and others)? The word has always an ethical meaning, and describes a change in the deeper recesses of our nature, which is followed by a corresponding change in the outer life. Such a sense is hardly applicable to Jacob. It seems better, therefore, to regard the words as applicable to Esau. He is regarded as a type of the hopeless apostate, who throws away his birthright through sensual indulgence or love of the world, and who, too late, finds the door of repentance closed to him, because repentance itself, in its true and deep sense, is impossible. Other commentators give the lighter interpretation to 'place of repentance,' and understand by it *locus penitentiæ*, a chance and opportunity by repentance of repairing the mischief—a result in this case impossible; and then they understand by 'it' such repentance as might repair the loss he had suffered (Alford). Others give to 'repentance' its deeper meaning, and refer the 'it' to that repentance. Thus regarded, the whole passage teaches that a time may come, possibly in the history of any of us, when through sensual indulgence and worldly tastes repentance becomes impossible, though men seek *it* carefully and with tears. There is a striking sermon of Melvill's on the text as thus interpreted. In favour of referring 'it' to the blessing rather than to repentance, is the historical fact;

and in favour of the deeper sense of repentance (not merely a change of his father's mind, or a cancelling of the result) is the uniformly ethical meaning of the word. In any case the lesson remains; sensual, worldly preferences may be so indulged as to become our masters; and we may wish to die the death of the righteous, and reap their rewards, and yet be rejected. That path cannot be safe where such a possibility is incurred. Whether the repentance comes too late, or the repentance, though in some sense desired, is really unattainable, or whether both suppositions are true, it is in any case an awful destiny, and men should take warning in time.

Vers. 18–29. All these warnings become the more impressive from the fact that our economy is one of much greater privilege than the previous, and that it is the last revelation which God will give.—**For ye have not drawn near to a mountain that is touched** (a material, tangible mountain) **and that burned with fire and blackness** (of clouds) **and darkness** (as in the night) **and tempest.** At the giving of the Law the top of the mountain burned with fire; lower down were black, impenetrable clouds, and out of the darkness which they caused came the mutterings of the storm. Amid this terror was heard the sound of a trumpet, and an articulate voice giving the commandments which were delivered to Israel; which voice was so awful that those who heard implored to be excused, begged off from hearing (declined to hear) more. The same word is found in the parable, 'They began to make excuse.'—**For** (a parenthetical explanation of their awe) **they could not bear what was commanded, *viz.* And if even a beast** (much more a man) **touch the mountain . . .**

Ver. 21. **And so terrible was the sight** (what was made to appear) **that Moses** shared their feeling of dread. Such was the access to God which ancient Israel possessed—an access that belonged to a visible mountain full of terror; an access rather of repulse and enforced approach, which they prayed might cease.

Vers. 22–24. Seven things, Bengel notes, show the inferiority of the condition of Israel under the Law, and seven things show the superiority of the true Israel under the Gospel. Our gathering-place is **Mount Zion** (not Sinai), the abode of Him who is Father and King,—**and the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. We are come to an innumerable company of angels** (literally, ten thousands of angels; not the comparatively few who witnessed the giving of the Law, and aided the administration of the old econony), **to the festal gathering of the Church of the first-born**—of the Christian Church of this age, consisting as it did of those who were heirs of the promises, and whose names are enrolled, not as were the names of the first-born of Israel, in earthly registers (Num. iii. 42), but in heaven itself; a privilege shared, moreover, not by the first-born only, but by the entire company of the redeemed (see Luke x. 20);—**and to God, the Judge of all.** The mention of the militant Church and of their adversaries brings up this thought: He is their Defender, and to Him they may commit their cause.—**And to the spirits of just men made perfect,** from righteous Abel downwards; **and to the Mediator of the recent and new covenant** (not the same word as in chap. ix. 15)—**Jesus** (the name of our Lord which the writer of this Epistle uses when speaking of His redeeming work), **and to the blood of sprinkling**—the blood that ratified the covenant is now offered to God and applied (not shed merely) to the human conscience,—**which speaketh better than Abel,** or than the [blood] of Abel. 'Than Abel' may refer to his offering or to his martyrdom. His offering had no intrinsic efficacy, and his martyrdom cried for vengeance. Christ's blood cried only for mercy, and secures it.

Ver. 25. **See that ye refuse**—decline—**not** (the same word as in ver. 19) **him that speaketh** (offering peace through the blood of Christ: see ver. 24): **for if they escaped not, declining as they did to hear him that spoke on earth**—a different word, meaning to speak as an oracle with Divine authority. God is the speaker in both cases; but the contrast is between God speaking on earth and through Moses who received the living oracles to give to men, and God speaking from heaven and in the life and blood of His Son—not concerning an earthly covenant with earthly blessings, but concerning blessings that are spiritual and eternal. The medium (the Son), the place, the blessedness of the message, all combine to make the guilt of rejecting the Gospel the greater (see vers. 1–5, and x. 28, 29).

Vers. 26, 27. In these verses we have fresh evidence of the accuracy of the views which the writer takes of the Gospel—a system that is to supersede Judaism as the prophet foretells, and a fresh ground of earnest remonstrance. This is the last economy, and men must beware of rejecting it.—**Whose voice then shook the earth** (Ex. xix. 18); literally, only the shaking was emblematical, as was the earthquake and the rending of the veil at Christ's death. It implied, therefore, a great change (comp. Isa. xiii. 13 and Joel ii. 10) in the state of things that preceded the old covenant.—**But now hath he promised**—and then follows the passage from Haggai, in which the coming of the Messiah is predicted, when all is to be changed, both by the removal of the things that are shaken and by the establishment of a new covenant, that of the Messiah.—27. **And this word yet once more**—once for all, as it means, shows plainly that there is to be one change only from the time when the prophet spoke, and consequently that the things which are introduced by that change are to remain unshaken. The shaking of the 'heavenly things' has created some difficulty. But, in fact, the new covenant affected both earth and heaven. The Word made flesh, the complete forgiveness of sin, eternal life through the blood of Christ, the introduction of sinners of all nations into the Church of God, the changing of the Church itself from an earthly into a spiritual fellowship, Christ exalted as Priest and King: these are changes that affect both worlds, but cannot themselves be changed. The shaking, therefore, here spoken of is not *now* future, as some suppose. It began at the incarnation (and so the 'I will shake' of the prophecy is here changed into 'I am shaking'), and it is only the complete realization of it that is still to come. The last clause, **as of things that have been made,** etc., refers probably not to creation but to the Jewish economy, to which the word 'made' has been already applied; and their removal is with the view to the permanence of the spiritual economy which is 'to abide.'

Ver. 28. Wherefore, we receiving as we do a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful (or have grace), **and thereby serve God acceptably** (well-pleasingly) **with godly reverence and fear.** Thankfulness, not discontent, is the becoming feeling, and when blended with fear ('awe') will make our service reverent and joyous. The Greek phrase favours this rendering (see 2 Tim. i. 3, Gr.). 'Let us have grace' is, however, a possible meaning.

Ver. 29. **For**—a fresh reason for the reverence **and the service—our God is a consuming fire.** The description is taken from Deut. iv. 22, and the meaning may be, Our God also (as well as the God of the Jews) is a consuming fire; but the former rendering—an additional reason simply—without specific reference to a distinction between our God and theirs, is the juster view. A devout sense of what we owe to God is a strong motive to holy service: so also is our reverence for God's holiness and justice. Thankfulness and fear are both among the motive forces of the Gospel, and both are stimulated by the character and acts (mercies and judgments alike) of the blessed God.

CHAPTER XIII. 1–25.

Admonitions to the Cultivation of Love, Hospitality, Compassion, and other Graces, 1–6.—The Loving Remembrance of Departed Leaders, etc.—Christian Sacrifice, 7–17.—Asks their Prayers, offers his own, commends to them his Epistle, speaks of the speedy Visit of Timothy, and closes with the usual Pauline Salutation, 18–25.

1,2 LET [a] brotherly love continue. [b] Be not forgetful to entertain strangers:[1] for thereby [c] some have entertained
3 angels unawares. [d] Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; *and* them which suffer adversity,[2] as being
4 yourselves also in the body. Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed[3] undefiled: [e] but[4] whoremongers and adulterers
5 God will judge. *Let your* conversation[5] *be* without covetousness;[6] *and* [f] *be* content with such things as ye have: for he
6 hath said, [g] I will never leave thee, nor[7] forsake thee. So that we may[8] boldly say,

[h] The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear
What man shall[9] do unto me

7 [i] Remember them which have the rule over you,[10] who have spoken[11] unto you the word of God: [k] whose faith follow,[12]
8 considering the end of *their* conversation.[13] Jesus Christ[14]
9 [l] the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. [m] Be not carried about[15] with divers and strange doctrines. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace; [n] not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied[16]
10 therein. [o] We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat
11 which serve the tabernacle. For [p] the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest

[1] *lit.* of love to strangers [2] are evil entreated
[3] Let marriage be held in honour, and the bed be [4] *read*, for
[5] life, *lit.* turn (mode of life, *or*, turn of mind) [6] *lit.* love of money
[7] *insert* will I ever [8] *omit* may
[9] *or*, I will not fear. What shall man . . . ? [10] *better*, your leaders
[11] in that they spake [12] copy (*lit.* imitate)
[13] life (*lit.* manner of life), *i.e.* the [noble] end their life had
[14] *insert* is [15] *read*, away [16] walked

[a] Rom. xii. 10; 1 Thes. iv. 9; 1 Pet. i. 22, ii. 17, iii. 8, iv. 8; 2 Pet. i. 7; 1 Jo. iii. 11, etc., iv. 7, xx. 21.
[b] Mat. xxv. 35; Rom. xii. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 9.
[c] Gen. xviii. 3, xix. 2.
[d] Mat. xxv. 36; Rom. xii. 15; 1 Cor. xii. 26; Col. iv. 18; 1 Pet. iii. 18.
[e] 1 Cor. vi. 9; Gal. v. 19, 21; Eph. v. 5; Col. iii. 5, 6; Rev. xxii. 15.
[f] Mat. vi. 25, 34; Phil. iv. 11, 12; 1 Tim. vi 6, 8.
[g] Deut. xxxi. 6, 8; Josh. i. 5; Gen. xxviii. 15; 1 Chron. xxviii. 20; Ps. xxxvii. 25.
[h] Ps. cxviii. 6, xxvii. 1, lvi. 4, 11, 12.
[i] Ver. 17.
[k] Ch. vi. 12.
[l] Jo. viii. 58; ch. i. 12; Rev. i. 4.
[m] Eph. iv. 14, v. 6; Col. ii. 4, 8; 1 Jo. iv. 1.
[n] Rom xiv. 17; Col. ii. 16; 1 Tim. iv. 3.
[o] 1 Cor. ix. 13, x. 18.
[p] Lev. xvi. 27; Ex. xxix. 14; Lev. iv. 11, 12, 21, vi. 30, ix. 11; Num. xix. 3.

12 for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also,
that he might sanctify the people with[17] his own blood,
13 [g]suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto
14 him without the camp, bearing [r]his reproach. [s]For here
15 have we no continuing city, but we seek one[18] to come. [t]By
him[19] therefore let us offer [u]the[20] sacrifice of praise to God
continually, that is, [v]the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks[21] to
16 his name. [w]But to do good and to communicate[22] forget
17 not: for [x]with such sacrifices God is well pleased. [y]Obey
them that have the rule over you,[10] and submit yourselves:
for [z]they watch for your souls, as they that must[23] give
account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief:[24]
18 for that *is*[25] unprofitable for you. [a]Pray for us: for we trust[26]
we have [b]a good conscience, in all things willing to live
19 honestly.[27] But I beseech *you* [c]the rather[28] to do this, that I
20 may be restored to you the sooner. Now [d]the God of peace,
[e]that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, [f]that[29]
great shepherd of the sheep, [g]through[30] the blood of the ever-
21 lasting covenant, [h]make you perfect in every good work[31] to
do his will, [i]working[32] in you[33] that which is well-pleasing in
his sight, through Jesus Christ; [k]to whom *be* glory for ever
22 and ever. Amen. And I beseech[34] you, brethren, suffer[35]
the word of exhortation: for [l]I have written a letter unto you
23 in few words. Know ye that [m]*our* brother Timothy [n]is set at
24 liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. Salute
all them [o]that have the rule over you,[36] and all the saints.
25 They of[37] Italy salute you. [p]Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

[f] Jo. xix. 17, 18; Acts vii. 58.
[r] Ch. xi. 26; 1 Pet. iv. 14.
[s] Mic. ii. 10; Phil. iii. 20; ch. xi. 10, 16, xii. 22.
[t] Eph. v. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 5.
[u] Lev. vii. 12; Ps. l. (xlix.) 14; 2 Chron. xxix. 31; Ps. lxix. 30, 31, cvii. 22, cxvi. 17.
[v] Is. lvii. 19 (Gr.); Hos. xiv. 2.
[w] Rom. xii. 13.
[x] 2 Cor. ix. 12; Phil. iv. 18; ch. vi. 10.
[y] Ver. 7; Phil. ii. 29; 1 Thes. v. 12; 1 Tim. v. 17.
[z] Ezek. iii. 17, xxxiii. 2, 7; Acts xx. 26, 28.
[a] Rom. xv. 30; Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3; 1 Thes. v. 25; 2 Thes. iii. 1.
[b] Acts xxiii. 1, xxiv. 16; 2 Cor. i. 12.
[c] Philem. 22.
[d] Rom. xv. 33, xvi. 20; 1 Thes. v. 23; 1 Cor. xiv. 33; Phil. iv. 9.
[e] Acts ii. 24, 32; Rom. iv. 24, viii. 11; 1 Cor. vi. 14, xv. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 14; Gal. i. 1; Col. ii. 12; 1 Thes. i. 10; 1 Pet. i. 21.
[f] Is. lxiii. 11, xl. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 23, xxxvii. 24; Jo. x. 11, 14; 1 Pet. ii. 25, v. 4.
[g] Is. liv. 8; Zech. ix. 11; ch. x. 29.
[h] 2 Thes. ii. 17; 1 Pet. v. 10.
[i] Gal. i. 5; 2 Tim. iv. 18; Rev. i. 6.
[k] 1 Pet. v. 12.
[l] Tit. iii. 15.
[m] 1 Thes. iii. 2.
[n] Phil. ii. 13.
[o] 1 Tim. vi. 12.
[p] Ver. 7, 17.

[17] through
[18] the *city* which is
[19] Through him
[20] *omit* the
[21] which give thanks, *or*, make confession
[22] *fellowship* (Acts ii. 42) *and distribution* (2 Cor. ix. 13) *are forms of the same word*
[23] shall
[24] lamentation, *or*, groaning
[25] *were*
[26] *read*, are persuaded
[27] honourably (*or*, well)
[28] more exceedingly
[29] the
[30] *Gr.* in
[31] *or read*, thing
[32] *or*, doing (*same word as in previous clause*)
[33] *read probably*, us
[34] *rather*, exhort
[35] *i.e.* bear with
[36] your leaders
[37] *or*, from

CHAP. XIII. The exhortations with which the Epistle closes are various; but all are connected with the argument and with the condition of those addressed. The writer has sought to confirm their faith and grace, and now a loving holy life, which ever grows feeble with waning faith, is his chief concern. To their faith he has exhorted them to add godliness (xii. 28, 29), and now they are to add to godliness brotherly kindness and universal love. It is characteristic of the Epistle, too, that the graces commended in the earlier verses of this chapter are those for which the readers are commended in previous chapters (x. 33, 34, vi. 10).

Ver. 1. The first admonition is to 'brotherly love'—a term used in the N. T. (not as in classic Greek to describe the love of brothers and sisters, but) to describe the love which Christians bear to one another in Christ, and as children of one Father (cp. ii. 11), part of the wider love which ἀγάπη describes (2 Pet. i. 7). It was not extinct (x. 32), the precept therefore is—as in the case of their faith—that it should continue, or abide. It is appropriately put first

among earthly duties, as it is the first-fruit of faith and the beginning of all else. How the title here given to this grace struck the heathen is made very clear by a passage in Lucian: 'Their most distinguished lawgiver (? Paul) has taught that they all become brethren one of another as soon as they are changed; that is, when they deny the Greek gods, and adore the crucified sophist.' He also enlarges on their sympathy with those in bonds, and on their hospitality. The sentiment struck the observer even while he scorned it as new and impracticable (see the passage in Delitzsch, ii. 371).

Ver. 2. Nor was this love confined to the family. The God they worshipped loves strangers (Deut. x. 18, 19). In His gracious philanthropy (Tit. iii. 4) He had welcomed *them* when strangers; and now He sometimes sends His messengers—His angels—in the disguise of wayfarers, that He may know whether those who bear His name are like Him in their kindness, and that He may reward them as of old (Gen. xviii.).

Ver. 3. Debtors to all the brotherhood, and to others besides, there were some who had strong claims on their sympathy. There were prisoners who wore their bonds for Christ's sake and the Gospel's; and in loving tenderness these they were to remember as bound with them (x. 34). There were others in afflictions natural to men; these also they were to bear ever in mind as being themselves in the body, and subject to like trials. Loving and prayerful remembrance might bring deliverance, and would certainly comfort their hearts and deepen their thankfulness.

Vers. 4, 5. The writer now speaks of two relations of life which are often placed side by side in Paul's Epistles—marriage and the purity which belongs to it, and covetousness, or 'the love of money' (Eph. v. 5; Col. iii. 5). The abrupt form of the sentences and the curt energy of the admonitions are intensely Pauline. **Let marriage be held in honour in all, and the bed be undefiled.** Whether these words are affirmative ('marriage *is* honourable'), as the A. V. and Delitzsch hold, or hortative ('let it *be* held'), has been much discussed. But the question is now settled. The words stand in the midst of exhortations. The next verse is equally without a verb, and is yet translated as an exhortation. And moreover, the reading in the next clause is 'for' and not 'but,' enforcing not a statement, but a command. 'In all persons,' of whatever rank, degree, or profession; or 'in all respects'—a rebuke of the 'false science' which was already spreading in the Church (1 Tim. iv. 13). It may be better to be single, if God's adjustment of gifts and tastes makes single life no serious burden (1 Cor. vii.), and if Christ is thereby better served. But all who marry in the Lord assume an honourable place. Only, where Christians have entered into that state, the bed must be undefiled by adulterous intercourse, or by lascivious sensuality. Those who *dishonour* the relation in either way, God will judge. **Let your life**—a word which describes the turn of a man's thoughts and actions—be free from **covetousness** ('the love of money'), [and be] **content with** (finding your sufficiency in) **such things as you have.** They needed the warning: For as men decline in grace, they grow in selfishness. The mischievous influence of this deceitful vice is strikingly described in 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, where 'the love of money' (the same word) is said to be a root of all kinds of evil, drowning men in perdition, or piercing them through with many sorrows. One guard against this evil is that we be content *with what we have;* but the security against it is the Divine promise.—**For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.** Five negations, 'I will never, no never, no never forsake,' give strength to the assurance. The words are taken from three passages (see marginal references) spoken to various Hebrew saints, and forming part of the general promise of the Gospel given to each believer. Our God is the God of salvations (Ps. lxviii. 20), not one, but many, and delivers us from want as well as from sin. He spared not His Son, and freely gives with Him all things.

Ver. 6. **So that we boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear: what shall man do unto me?** So the Hebrew reads, and so more naturally the Greek of this passage.

Ver. 7. This verse is connected in part with the preceding. **Remember them who are your leaders**—a title found only in this chapter in the Epistles, but used in the Gospels and Acts for the leaders of the Church (Acts xv. 22; Luke xxii. 26). Leadership is the prominent thought with so much of ruling as is essential to lead. As applied to ministers, it gives no authority to make new laws in Christ's kingdom, or even to enforce Christ's commands by any authority except His own.—**The which** (who have this quality that—a word which defines the ground and the limit of their authority) **have spoken to you the word of God** (the Gospel); **whose faith** (not their creed, but their blessed trust in trouble and fidelity to principle) **copy** (or imitate), **thoroughly considering what a blessed end their life had.** These words refer not necessarily to martyrdom, of which, as yet, there were but few examples. The meaning is rather, that a course of Christian conduct, which even to the end is the outcome of a holy noble faith, is well worthy of the contemplation and imitation of all who observe it.

Ver. 8. This verse is closely connected with the preceding, though not in the way the Authorised Version (with a colon, or sometimes a comma, at the end of ver. 7) indicates, as it is also with what follows. It is a general truth. **Jesus Christ is, the same yesterday** (when our fathers lived and struggled), **to-day** (now that we live and struggle), **and throughout the ages.** He was the chief theme of the Gospel they preached—so 'the word of God' generally means in the New Testament. His power and love and grace are all unchanging and exhaustless.

Ver. 9. Very different from the *varied* and strange (foreign) doctrines (teachings) with which this Gospel is sometimes confounded, and very different from the *legal precepts* as to meats which are profitless as means of quickened life, or of true salvation, by which we must **not suffer ourselves to be carried away** (the true reading, not 'carried about'): **For it is a good thing** (a fine thing—a thing that has the beauty of virtue as well as the substance of it) **that the heart be established** (be made strong and firm) **with grace** (here opposed as a Divine operation in the soul to the outward and lifeless precepts of Jewish teachers, Col. ii. 22, 23)—the flesh **profiting nothing** (John vi. 63), **wherein those that walked** (a common Pauline expression, Eph. ii. 2–11;

Col. iii. 7) **were not profited.** The precepts of a ritual law have no living power, no saving efficacy. The mind that is occupied with them is generally blind to the great duties of piety and virtue, and is neither peaceful nor strong. The simplicity of Gospel rites is as certainly helpful to holiness as the purity of Gospel truth.

Vers. 10–12. And yet we have our altar and our meat. We are worshippers, nay, even *priestly* worshippers. Our altar is the cross: our sin-offering the body of our Lord. 'His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed.' But all is hidden from the view and forbidden to the touch of those who serve the earthly tabernacle. Under the Law, some offerings were shared by the priest and people, and the arrangement implied that fellowship was restored and ceremonial expiation was completed. But the sin-offering of atonement was not eaten (Lev. vi. 30), and the bodies of national and priestly expiations were burnt without the camp. When atonement was a figure only, and not a reality, the worshipper had no communion with what professed to furnish it. *Now* we discern the *body*, and are partakers of it, and claim the reconciliation which the partaking implies. The old altar must be renounced, and the old sacrifice abandoned. Men must go to the place where Christ was offered (cp. ix. 28), the place where Christ offered Himself (ix. 25), and those who seek acceptance through legal sacrifices have no part in Him, as they had no part in that sacrifice, which was the completest type of His work, yet was itself powerless to make full atonement, and therefore insufficient to secure the reconciliation and the strength of which the eating of the altar was the sign.

Ver. 13. Of Christ the sin-offering we may partake, provided we go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. The cross is the meeting-place of all who would be saved. To number ourselves with those who cast Him out, and so unconsciously made Him the antitype of the holiest of the ancient sacrifices, is to be undone. We must abandon the Law, we must find in Christ Himself the sin-offering in which we are to share, if we desire to partake of the forgiveness and holiness of the Gospel.

Ver. 14. Israel still claimed to be the people of God, and Jerusalem was outwardly His dwelling-place. But God had already quitted it. Jerusalem, with its temple and rites—all were condemned. Here, therefore, we have no continuing city, no material temple, no imperfect sacrifice; but the cross and Christ and heaven the antitype of them all.

Ver. 15. Meanwhile our sacrifice or peace-offering is praise; 'the perpetual offering,' as even Jews described it, 'which is never to cease' —the fruit, 'the calves,' of lips that are ever giving thanks to His name. Praise, continuous praise, is the fitting recognition of an abiding Saviour and an unending salvation.

Ver. 16. Nor is that all: there must be also the further sacrifice of a beneficent and generous life; for with such sacrifices—'well-doing' and fellowship in love, in service, and in gifts—God is well pleased. A life of cheerful thankfulness, of ceaseless well-doing, of ready participation with others in the gifts God has entrusted to us—these are the offerings of the Gospel; the one great sin-offering of our Lord possessing ceaseless power.

Ver. 17, etc. Having referred to deceased leaders and to their stedfastness, the writer is naturally led to speak of the danger of apostatizing to Judaism; he therefore exhorts them to come completely out of it and boldly follow Christ. He now returns to their leaders. **Obey** (give, and keep giving, the obedience which springs from trust in them, and from the persuasion that their rule is right) **your leaders, and submit yourselves** (to their reproof and admonition, even to their authority); and this rule he enforces by a delicate reference to the leaders' responsibility; **for** it **is** their duty and their right to watch over and in the interest of your souls, free alike from indolence and from false security, **as having to give account, that they may do this work** (of watching) **with joy, and not mourning** (literally 'groaning') over it or you; **for**, if it is a grief to them, the loss will be yours; **that is unprofitable for you.**

Ver. 18. The writer now speaks of himself and of his colleagues, all watchers over them, and asks the prayers of his readers, as Paul does in all his Epistles. **Pray for us, for we are persuaded** (the perfect tense, 'we trust,' gives place to the present passive) **that we have a good conscience.** He was conscious of no evil. He had exhorted them, rebuked them, and instructed them. He had also suffered. And he felt he was blameless in all. The feeling, however, may be a delusion; and yet it rests on the teaching of God's Word, and is confirmed by God's blessing and by our higher consciousness—that we are really **desiring** (striving, having a will) **to behave**, to live, **honourably in all things.** The Greek words for 'a good' conscience and 'honourably,' are forms of the same word, and express the beauty, the nobleness of goodness. To live a good and noble life in all things is an earnest purpose, and the conscience which affirms this is our purpose, is itself worthy of the life we desire to live; not blind or perverted, but noble and true. His life and his teaching had probably both been subjects of distrust among the Hebrews. Paul's gospel, which this Epistle certainly represents, was still in disrepute. He therefore asks their prayers as helpful both to himself and to themselves.

Ver. 19. **And I beseech you the more exceedingly** (earnestly) **to do this**, *i.e.* to pray for us (comp. Philem. 22), **that I may be restored to you the sooner.** This language agrees remarkably with the deep affection Paul cherished for the Hebrew Church at Jerusalem, a Church he visited many times.

Vers. 20, 21. To this desire for their prayers is added his own benediction, as in Paul's Epistles generally (1 Thess. v. 23, etc.). **Now the God of peace**—a common title of God in Paul's Epistles, used in different connections, and probably with different meanings. Here it is specially appropriate; partly because of the troubles that harassed and threatened them, and partly because it implies how completely God had been pacified and reconciled through the death of His Son, who 'came preaching peace.' God is further described, **who brought again from the dead** (not too much for ἀνα and ἐκ), as one who had made full atonement for sin, and having paid the debt, could no longer be held in the bondage of the grave. Only here in this Epistle is the resurrection named, probably as proving the completeness of Christ's work. Everywhere else Christ passes from the altar to the Holy of Holies as priest and offering, to make

intercession for us. The phrase, 'from the dead,' coupled with what follows, 'that great Shepherd of the sheep,' points to Isa. lxiii. 11, where Moses, the shepherd of the sheep, is said to have been brought up out of the sea. Moses from the sea, Christ from the dead, each for his own work.—**The great shepherd of the sheep**, who had given His life for them, who was great as Priest (x. 21), and great as Shepherd too. His self-sacrificing tenderness, His ceaseless care, His power, His resources, His authority, all are included in this title—a favourite representation of our Lord in ancient Art.—**In the blood of the everlasting covenant**, *i.e.* God brought Him from the dead by virtue of, in the power of, the blood, which ratified not the temporary covenant of Sinai, but the eternal covenant of grace. God's peace is not a truce for a time; it is a permanent peace, an agreement for eternity. The interpretation that Christ was made shepherd by virtue of the blood of the covenant is hardly scriptural. He was shepherd before He died. The acceptance of His atonement, the efficacy of His blood, was the condition of His resurrection. If He had not risen, it must have been because atonement was not made; and if atonement was not made, we should still have been in our sins.—**Even our Lord Jesus Christ.** Here the name that is above every name (our 'Lord') is given to Jesus. He who is the Shepherd, who died for His sheep, who keeps them, feeds them, guides them, protects them, is also their lord; the Lord of their hearts as He is also of their creed. By His resurrection God acknowledges the validity of the atonement; by accepting Christ as Lord, we make the blessings of it our own.—**Perfect you** (not the common word so translated. It means to complete all the parts, to put them in order, and fit them for use), **make you ready, active, fit, in every good work to do** (literally, to do out and out so as to accomplish—the force of the tense) **his will, doing in you** (the same repetition of words as in Phil. ii. 13) **that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.** Whether God works through Jesus Christ, or whether what is well-pleasing to God is well-pleasing through Jesus Christ, has been much discussed. The former is preferable to the latter; but there is no reason why both should not be combined. God works in us through Him what is well-pleasing through Him.—**To whom**, *i.e.* to God, the principal subject of the sentence; to Him who brought up from the dead the Lord Jesus, who can perfect us, and is working for this purpose. Glory and dominion are ascribed to the Son in Rev. i. 5, 6, and perhaps in 1 Pet. iv. 11, as they are to the Father, Phil. iv. 20, and to both, Rev. v. 13; and so it is not material to whom we refer the inscription here. But it is more natural to refer it to the Father, to whom the prayer is presented.

Ver. 22. **Now I exhort you, brethren, bear with** (in the sense of giving a patient, willing audience to; see Acts xviii. 14; 2 Cor. xi. 4) **the word of exhortation.** The language is partly apologetic, on the ground that the writer stands in no close relation to his readers, and yet had not spared them in his warnings (cp. vi. and x.). All he had to say, however, is made as brief as possible.—**For** (with deeper reasons for such forbearance, there is also the brevity of the letter itself) **I have written a letter** (which is implied in the word used) **in few words.** This is the first time the writer speaks in the singular number, as it is the first intimation he gives that the treatise is an epistle. A similiar close is found in Rom. xvi. 17, and in 1 Cor. xvi. 15.

Ver. 23. **Know ye** (imperative rather than indicative, as a matter of joy, one of the prisoners whose bonds you shared in spirit is now free) **that our brother Timothy is set at liberty** (the most natural rendering. The word is used for entering on some official work, Acts xiii. 3, xv. 30; but a fuller description would have been necessary if that had been the meaning here); **with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.** This language does not prove that Paul wrote the Epistle, but it intimates that the readers knew the writer, and it is certain that no one stood in closer relation to Paul than Timothy, especially towards the close of the apostle's life (see Phil. ii. 19).

Ver. 24. **Salute all your leaders**, the chief men among you, **and all the saints**, *i.e.* either of the Church or those Christians outside of the Church, whom they or their leaders might meet. **They of Italy**, *i.e.* those who belonged to Italy, whether then residing in Italy or not (comp. Acts xvii. 13). In these expressions there seems an intentional indefiniteness intended to conceal the place where the Epistle was written.—**Grace be with you all** (rather, **Grace be with all of you**; an order of words that gives individuality to the message as well as universality).—**Amen**: Grace, the free result of Divine love; grace which justifies and sanctifies and guides us; grace which begins and completes our salvation; an especially appropriate ending of this Epistle, and the characteristic ending of each of Paul's Epistles, and of his only, in the New Testament.

The only subscription that has any critical value is 'To the Hebrews.' Variations are found in some MSS.; 'was written from Italy by Timothy,' one MS. adding 'in Hebrew;' 'from Rome' (A). But no argument can be based on these readings.

Three lessons are suggested by the structure and argument of this Epistle. 1. The teaching which distinguishes doctrine from precept, and makes precept the more important, is rebuked by the very order of the Epistle itself, as in all Paul's Epistles. The doctrinal teaching suggests the form of the precepts, and supplies the strongest reasons for obedience. Spiritual truths on sin, Christ, redemption, eternal life, are largely the foundation and the motive-forces of practical duty.

2. The need of a priesthood, and the fact that Christ is the great High Priest, superseding every other, all-sufficient and eternal, are essential parts of the Gospel. Without the recognition of the first, there is no adequate sense of sin and of God. Without the recognition of the second, there is no pacifying of the conscience, and no free personal access to God as the loving Father of all who believe.

3. False conceptions of the Gospel and of God's way of peace, when based on institutions and teaching that are originally Divine, are among the greatest hindrances to salvation, and among the most fruitful sources of apostasy. Because Judaism was Divine, and the Jews believed it, they were in danger of rejecting Christ—in greater danger than if they had been heathens. Truth blended with error, God's word misunderstood and believed, may be as great hindrances to holiness and charity as heresy or unbelief.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE OF JAMES.

THIS Epistle is the first in that division of the books of the New Testament known by the name of the *Catholic Epistles*. To this division belong seven Epistles: the Epistle of James, the two Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude.

The term *Catholic* was applied by Origen in the third century to First Peter and First John; but it was not until the fourth century that it was used to distinguish this group of Epistles. In this application we first meet with it in the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, who speaks of 'the seven Catholic Epistles' (*H. E.* ii. 23). Various meanings have been attached to the term. Some regard it as synonymous with canonical, and as used to denote those Epistles which were universally recognised. Others understand the term as opposed to heretical, and as employed to denote those writings which agree with the doctrines of the universal church. And others think that, after the Gospels and the Acts were collected into one group, and the Pauline Epistles into another, the remaining Epistles were called catholic to denote the common or general collection of all the apostles. But all those meanings are defective; they do not distinguish this group of Epistles; they are as applicable to the other writings of the New Testament. The most appropriate and approved meaning of the term is *general*, in the sense of circular; used to denote those Epistles which are addressed, not to any particular church or individual, as the Pauline Epistles, but to a number of churches. It is true that the Second and Third Epistles of John form an exception, as they are addressed to individuals; but they are attached to the larger Epistle of the same author, and may be considered as an appendix to it. Although the term *Catholic* is given to these seven Epistles primarily to distinguish them from the Epistles of Paul, yet, taken in the above sense, it appropriately distinguishes them. Thus the Epistle of James is a catholic or circular Epistle: it is not addressed to any particular church or individual, but generally to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad. Corresponding to this general address, the references in it are general, not personal; there are no salutations appended to it, as is the case with many of the Epistles of Paul.

SECT. I.—THE AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE.

The author designates himself 'James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.' Now there are three distinguished disciples bearing the name James. 1. James the son of Zebedee and brother of John, one of the three favoured apostles of our Lord. 2. James the son of Alphæus, called also James the Less (Mark xv. 40), another of the apostles. 3. James the Lord's brother, the so-called bishop of Jeru-

salem; unless, indeed, these two last are the same person. The question which meets us is: To which of these three does the authorship of this Epistle belong?

Some have attributed the Epistle to James the son of Zebedee. This is stated in a manuscript of the old Italic version, the Codex Corbeiensis, and in the early printed editions of the old Syriac or Peshito, although it is doubtful whether it was originally in that version itself. But this opinion is now generally abandoned as opposed to all probability.[1] James the son of Zebedee was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I., A.D. 44 (Acts xii. 2); but this is too early a date for the composition of this Epistle. The gospel was then scarcely propagated beyond the boundaries of Judea: there could hardly, at that early period, be any Jewish churches of the dispersion to which to write; nor could the Christian Church be in that state of development which this Epistle presupposes. This, of course, proceeds on the supposition, which we shall afterwards prove to be correct, that this Epistle was written to Jewish Christians, and not to Jews generally.

Christian tradition has pointed to James 'the Lord's brother' as the author of this Epistle (Eus. *H. E.* ii. 23); and with this the state of the case fully accords. This James was permanently resident in the church of Jerusalem; he appears to have been its recognised head; if not an apostle, he was at least a person of acknowledged importance among the apostles; he presided at the Council of Jerusalem, and is mentioned by Paul as one of the pillars of the church (Gal. ii. 9). Hence, as the head of the Jewish church at Jerusalem, he would have a great interest in the believing Jews outside of that city—'the twelve tribes who were scattered abroad,' could write to them with authority, and would be listened to by them with deference and respect.

The opinion of Roman Catholics and early Protestant commentators is that this James the Lord's brother is identical with the Apostle James the son of Alphæus.[2] This opinion was not entertained by the early Church, and appears to have been first introduced by Jerome. According to this view, the word *brother* is used in an extended sense for cousin. The brothers of Christ are mentioned by name in the Gospels; they are James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3). Now two of these names, James and Joses, are elsewhere mentioned as the names of the sons of Mary, the wife of Clopas, who is assumed to be the same as the sister of the Virgin. 'Now there stood at the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene' (John xix. 25); and elsewhere we are informed that this Mary was the mother of James the Less and Joses (Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40); and consequently these two were the cousins of our Lord. It is further maintained that Clopas is the same name as Alphæus—these being different forms of expressing the Hebrew name in Greek characters; and hence the Apostle James the son of Alphæus is the same as James the son of Clopas and Mary, the cousin of our Lord. We also know that this James had a brother named Judas; for among the apostles mention is made of 'Judas, the brother of James' (Acts i. 13). And further, another apostle named Simon is mentioned in the apostolic lists, always in company with James and Judas, so that there is no improbability in supposing him to be another brother. Hence, then, the sons of Alphæus, or Clopas, and Mary, the sister of the Virgin, namely James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, are regarded as identical with those bearing the same names, who are mentioned

[1] This opinion has of late been ingeniously defended by the Rev. F. T. Basset in his Commentary on the Epistle of James.

[2] See the discussion on the brothers of our Lord in a note appended to Matt. xiii. 58 in this Commentary. The remarks here were written independently of that note.

as the brothers of our Lord. The names are the same, and to identify them we have only to suppose that the word *brother* is used in an extended sense so as to include cousins.

It would occupy too much space to discuss this view. The reasoning is plausible, but will not bear examination; and the objections against it are so numerous and great, that it may almost be considered as demonstrated that James the brother of our Lord, and James the son of Alphæus, are not identical. 1. In no passage of the New Testament is it indicated that the brothers of our Lord were only His cousins; they are always called brothers, never relations; and it is arbitrary to assume that the word *brothers* here denotes cousins, a sense which it never has in the New Testament. The same objection is equally strong with reference to those who are called the sisters of our Lord (Matt. xiii. 56). 2. When the brothers of our Lord are mentioned, they are always distinguished from the twelve apostles. We are expressly informed that, during the lifetime of Christ, His brothers did not believe on Him (John vii. 5).[1] And after His ascension, when they became believers, and associated with the disciples, they are still distinguished from the twelve (Acts i. 14; 1 Cor. ix. 5). This could not have been the case, if two, if not three, of them had been apostles. 3. It is extremely doubtful if Mary the wife of Clopas was the sister of the Virgin. The words in John's Gospel are: 'Now there stood at the cross of Jesus His mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene' (John xix. 25). It is more probable that four women are here mentioned in pairs, instead of three; and as we learn from the other Gospels that Salome, the mother of John, also stood at the cross (Matt. xxvi. 56; Mark xv. 40), the probability is that she, and not Mary the wife of Clopas, was the sister of our Lord's mother: John having abstained to mention her name, in accordance with his usual reserve in personal matters. This avoids the awkwardness of two sisters being called by the same name. On this supposition, James the son of Alphæus was no relation to our Lord. 4. It is by no means a certainty that Clopas and Alphæus are the same names. 5. It is equally uncertain that Judas the apostle was the brother of James, and not rather, as the words might have been translated more in accordance with the Greek idiom, the son of (an unknown) James. 6. The uncertainty is still greater with regard to the relationship of Simon Zelotes to James and Judas. For these reasons, then, we consider that the identity of James the son of Alphæus, and James 'the Lord's brother,' must be relinquished.[2]

But if James the Lord's brother is not identical with James the son of Alphæus, who is he? On this point there are two opinions: the one, that he and the other brothers of our Lord were the sons of Mary and Joseph; and the other, that they were the children of Joseph by a previous marriage.

Many eminent divines suppose that James was a real brother of our Lord, being the son of Mary and Joseph. According to this opinion, the words brothers and sisters, when spoken of in connection with our Lord, are to be taken in their literal sense; they being likewise the children of Mary. Such an opinion was first started toward the close of the fourth century by Helvidius.[3] It was opposed to the then universal tradition of the Christian Church concerning the perpetual virginity of

[1] The argument is independent of the meaning attached to the *unbelief* of our Lord's brothers, whether it was absolute or partial.

[2] This identity is asserted by Bishop Wordsworth in his Greek Testament, and has more recently been defended by Dean Scott in his excellent Commentary on the Epistle of James, forming part of the Speaker's Commentary.

[3] It is a matter of dispute whether Tertullian held that James was the son of Mary and Joseph: his words are ambiguous. Lightfoot thinks it highly probable that he held the Helvidian view.

Mary; and on this account is still repugnant to the feelings of many Protestants, as well as of all Romanists. On the other hand, it is argued that the idea, that Mary should have had no other children of her own, is a mere sentiment arising from a false notion of the superior sanctity of celibacy, and that it has no foundation in the word of God (Luke ii. 7; Matt. i. 25). There are, however, two positive objections against this opinion. 1. It would appear that James is expressly called an apostle by Paul, when he writes: 'Other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother' (Gal. i. 19). To this it has been replied, either that the word *apostle* is here used in an extended sense: as in the New Testament it is not confined to the twelve, but is applied to other distinguished disciples, as, for example, Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiv. 16); or that the restriction does not apply to the word apostles, but to the whole clause in the sense: Except Peter, I saw no other apostle, but I saw James the Lord's brother (comp. Luke iv. 25–27). 2. If Mary had children of her own, Jesus would not, when dying, have recommended her to the care of John (John xix. 26, 27): an objection to which we have found no satisfactory solution.[1] We are ignorant of the circumstances of the case; but this objection cannot outweigh the greater and more numerous objections to the theory of identity.

There is still a third opinion—namely, that James and the other brothers and sisters of our Lord were the children of Joseph by a previous marriage, and were, on account of this relationship, regarded as his brothers and sisters. By reason of our Lord's miraculous conception, they were actually no relations; but they would be considered by the world as His brothers. This view was the general opinion of the early Greek Fathers, as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Gregory of Nyssa, and so is the one best attested by ecclesiastical tradition. It lessens, though it does not entirely remove, the objection arising from Jesus recommending His mother to the care of John, that is, to her nephew, instead of to her step-children; and it does no violence to the general sentiment of the Church concerning the perpetual virginity of Mary. Still, however, though ably maintained by Bishop Lightfoot, and apparently adopted by Dean Plumptre, it has not been much favoured by modern divines. It has too much the appearance of a hypothesis invented to avoid a difficulty; nor is there the slightest intimation in Scripture that Joseph had been married previous to his espousals with the Virgin.

This James, the Lord's brother, is scarcely alluded to in the Gospels, but is frequently mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. He was a prominent person in the early church. During our Lord's lifetime it is probable that with his brothers he remained unbelieving (John vii. 5), but was converted by a special appearance of Christ to him after His resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 7). From the first, owing probably to his high moral character and relationship to Christ, he occupied a distinguished position in the early church. To him Peter sent a message, on his release from imprisonment: 'Go show these things unto James and the brethren' (Acts xii. 7). He presided at the Council of Jerusalem, and pronounced the decree of the assembled church (Acts xv. 19). To him, as the head of the church of Jerusalem, Paul repaired on his last visit to that city (Acts xxi. 18). In the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul gives him the honourable designation of 'James the Lord's brother' (Gal. i. 19); and along with Peter and John, he mentions him as one of the three pillars of the church (Gal. ii. 9). In the same Epistle we are also informed, that it was the presence of 'certain who came from James' which was the cause of Peter's withdrawing himself

[1] An ingenious solution is given by Dr. Bushnell in his sermon on Mary the mother of Jesus: 'Why Jesus committed her thus to John and not to the four brothers it is not difficult to guess; for John has a home as they certainly have not, and are not likely soon to have.'

from converse with the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 21). And in the short Epistle of Jude, the author calls himself 'Jude the brother of James' (Jude 1).

If not actually bishop of Jerusalem, it would appear from these scriptural notices that James at least exercised a very important influence in the mother church. He was the recognised head of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. When Christianity was chiefly confined to Jewish converts, his influence must have been almost paramount. And after its extension to the Gentiles, the Jewish Christians would esteem him to be peculiarly their apostle, as Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles; his influence would not be confined to Jerusalem, but would extend to all believers among the twelve tribes, wherever scattered.

Nor is ecclesiastical history silent concerning this pillar of Christianity; he occupies a large space in the traditions of the church. Certainly the accounts that have reached us are mixed with fable, but still in them we can trace the character of the man. They all describe him as a man of the greatest moral strictness, to whom the epithet 'the Just' was universally applied, and affirm that he continued to the last an observer of the Mosaic law. He suffered martyrdom by the Jews, a few years before the commencement of the Jewish war. The accounts of his death vary. It is thus recorded by Josephus, in a very remarkable passage, the genuineness of which has without good reasons been disputed: 'Ananias assembled the sanhedrim, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who is called Christ, whose name was James, and some of his companions; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned' (*Ant.* xx. 9. 1). According to the account of Hegesippus, preserved in the history of Eusebius, James was cast down from the pinnacle of the temple, and stoned while he was yet alive, and at length put to death by a blow from a fuller's club (*H. E.* ii. 23).

From all these scriptural and traditionary notices, it would appear that James was a man of the strictest integrity, and that he continued to the last an observer of the law of Moses—'a just man according to the law.' By becoming a Christian he did not renounce Judaism; he resided in Jerusalem, and continued to worship in the temple. He was even more than Peter the apostle of the circumcision (Gal. ii. 8); the sphere of his labours was restricted to the Jewish converts to Christianity. Hence, then, his practical relation to the Jewish law was different from that of Paul. Paul felt himself to be dead to the law, freed from its requirements; he probably observed it, but not strictly; when it served to promote the diffusion of the gospel, he could become without the law to those who were without the law; though, on other occasions, he became a Jew to the Jews that he might gain the Jews. James, on the other hand, did not dissever Christianity from Judaism; he regarded Christianity as the perfection of Judaism; he was far from wishing to impose the Jewish yoke on the Gentile Christians, but he saw no necessity to separate himself from the ancient people, or to renounce their religion. 'Had not,' observes Dr. Schaff, 'the influence of James been modified and completed by that of a Peter, and especially a Paul, Christianity, perhaps, would never have cast off entirely the envelope of Judaism and risen to independence. Yet the influence of James was necessary. He, if any, could gain the ancient chosen nation as a body. God placed such a representative of the purest form of Old Testament piety in the midst of the Jews to make their transition to the faith of the Messiah as easy as possible, even at the eleventh hour. But when they refused this last messenger of peace, the divine forbearance was exhausted, and the fearful, long-threatened judgment broke upon them. And with this the mission of James was fulfilled. He was not to outlive the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.'[1]

[1] *History of the Apostolic Church*, vol. ii. p. 38.

Sect. II.—The Readers of the Epistle.

As the personality of the author has been the subject of much dispute, so likewise have been the persons to whom this Epistle was primarily addressed. They are designated 'the twelve tribes who are scattered abroad;' but very different meanings have been attached to these words.

Some suppose that the Epistle was addressed to Christians in general. They take the expression 'twelve tribes' in a figurative sense to denote 'the Israel of God' (Gal. vi. 16), in contrast to 'Israel after the flesh' (1 Cor. x. 18). But such an interpretation is wholly inadmissible. There is not the slightest intimation in the Epistle that a figurative sense is to be given to these words; and we must beware of assigning a metaphorical sense to the words of Scripture when no such sense is indicated by the context or required by the passage. Moreover, James speaks of Abraham as 'our father' (Jas. ii. 21), thus indicating that as a Jew he wrote to the Jews.

Others suppose that the Epistle was addressed to Jews generally—to non-Christian as well as to Christian Jews. This is an opinion which possesses considerable plausibility, and has found many able supporters.[1] The Epistle, it is affirmed, is addressed 'to the twelve tribes,' without any recognition of the Christian faith of the readers; they are described merely according to their nationality. Besides, it contains various statements which can hardly apply to Christians, and can only be true of unconverted Jews (ii. 6, 7, v. 6). But the general contents of the Epistle are opposed to this opinion. The readers, whoever they were, were at least professing Christians; their Christianity is taken for granted. James rests his authority upon being 'a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ' (i. 1). His readers, without distinction, are such as God hath begotten by the word of truth, that is, the gospel of Christ (i. 18). He speaks of their possessing the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory (ii. 1). He mentions those who blasphemed that worthy name, namely, the name of Christ, by which they were called (ii. 7). And he exhorts them to patience because of the advent of Christ: 'Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord' (v. 7).

Hence, then, we conclude that this Epistle was primarily addressed to Jewish Christians. To this, indeed, it has been objected that there are portions in it which are inapplicable to Christians: the severe invectives of the writer (iii. 9, iv. 1, 4), and especially his denunciation of judgment upon the rich (v. 1–6), can only refer to unbelievers. But we do not know the state of moral corruption which prevailed among the Jewish Christians; and certainly, if we were to judge of them by the conduct of many professing Christians of the present day, we would not regard those invectives as too strong. And with regard to the attack upon the rich in the fifth chapter, it is so worded that it may be regarded as an apostrophe addressed to rich unbelievers—the proud oppressors of the Jewish Christians; though it is not impossible that there existed in the Christian Church rich professors to whom these words of stern reproof were not inapplicable.

The phrase '*twelve tribes*' was a usual appellation of Jews in general. Thus Paul, in his speech before Agrippa, says: 'Unto which promise our twelve tribes hope to attain' (Acts xxvi. 7). The twelve tribes were now mixed together, and formed the

[1] The opinion advocated by Basset, and necessary for his theory of the authorship of James the son of Zebedee.

nation of the Jews. Many of the Israelites were left in their own land by their Assyrian conquerors, and many of them returned at the restoration from Babylon. The locality of these twelve tribes is contained in the addition, '*who are scattered abroad.*' They were the Jews of the dispersion—Jews resident beyond the boundaries of Palestine. In almost every country at that time Jews of the dispersion were found; but there were especially two great dispersions—the Babylonian and the Greek. The Epistle being written in Greek, it would seem that the Greek dispersion (John vii. 35) was primarily intended. Accordingly the persons to whom it was addressed would be such as had passed over to Christianity from among those who are called Hellenists or Grecians in the Acts of the Apostles, *i.e.* Christian Jews who resided out of Palestine and who spoke the Greek language. The churches addressed were in all probability those in the countries in the closest proximity to Judea, namely, Phenicia, Syria, Cilicia, and Proconsular Asia. The members of these churches were, it is supposed, chiefly composed of Jewish Christians; not like those churches founded by Paul, which were chiefly composed of Gentile Christians.

The condition of those Christian Jews of the dispersion, as described in the Epistle, was such as to excite great anxiety and concern. They were exposed to manifold trials; their members were in general poor; and they were dragged by their rich oppressors before the judgment-seat (ii. 6). But it would appear that they did not bear their trials with Christian patience. Instead of trust in God, they gave way to doubt, and thus became double-minded, with their affections divided between God and the world. On account of their trials, they were strongly tempted to apostasy, to renounce their Christianity, and to relapse into their former Judaism. They carried the spirit of Jewish covetousness with them into the Christian Church, and were eagerly desirous of earthly riches; looked upon poverty as a crime; showed even in their religious assemblies an obsequious attention to the rich; and by their actions declared that they preferred the friendship of the world to the friendship of God. This worldly spirit was the occasion of bitter strife among themselves; and especially there was a wide breach among them between the rich and the poor. Their religion had degenerated into a mere formal observance of certain religious ceremonies; they trusted to their privileges, both as Jews and Christians, without giving due attention to holiness of life; and they rested on their Christian faith, although divorced from good works. Of course we are not to suppose that all were thus estranged from the Christian life; but even they who preserved their Christianity purest were living in the midst of temptation, and required to be admonished and encouraged to perseverance.

Sect. III.—Place and Time of Writing.

With regard to the *place* of composition, there is hardly any difference of opinion. This was undoubtedly Jerusalem, where James usually resided, and which was the proper centre for an epistle addressed to Jewish Christians to issue from. In this Epistle the mother church addresses her offspring. 'The local colouring of the Epistle,' as Dean Plumptre remarks, 'indicates with sufficient clearness where the writer lived. He speaks, as the prophets of Israel had done, of the early and latter rain (v. 7); the hot blast of the *kausôn* or simoom of the desert (i. 11); the brackish springs of the hills of Judah and Benjamin (iii. 11); the figs, the olives, and the vines with which those hills were clothed (iii. 12): all these form part of the surroundings of the writer. Storms and tempests, such as might have been seen on the Sea of Galilee, or in visits to Cæsarea or Joppa, and the power of man to guide the

great ships safely through them, have at some time or other been familiar to him' (iii. 4).[1]

The *time* of composition, on the other hand, is a matter of greater difficulty, and has given rise to a variety of opinions. Assuming the correctness of our view regarding the author of the Epistle, it was evidently written on or before the year 63, when James was martyred. But it may be disputed whether it was written before or after Paul's publication of the doctrine of justification without the works of the law. Those who suppose that the object of this Epistle was to correct the perversions of Paul's views must assign a later date, not long before the death of James; whereas those who think that James makes no reference to Paul's views, but refers only to errors which he knew to be then prevalent among the Jewish Christians, may assign a much earlier date, though not necessitated to do so.

Some suppose that the Epistle contains a designed refutation of certain perversions of Paul's doctrine of justification, that doctrine having been apprehended as implying that faith was all that was necessary for salvation, and that works or acts of holy obedience were unnecessary. They think that the very terms employed by James—justification, faith, and works—point to a Pauline origin, and are a proof that Paul's doctrine was already published and perverted among those Jewish Christians to whom James wrote. James, it is said, expresses himself with evident reference to the conclusion which Paul arrived at (Jas. ii. 24; Rom. iii. 28). The example of Abraham's justification is adduced by both Paul and James, as an illustration of their respective views (Jas. ii. 21; Rom. iv. 1–3). And various expressions in this Epistle are considered to be allusions to similar expressions in Paul's Epistles. The relation of James' doctrine of justification to that of Paul's will be considered when we come to the exposition of the Epistle. Meanwhile we would only remark that it is not necessary to suppose that James was acquainted with Paul's doctrine, or that he had read his Epistles. The supposed allusions to the Pauline Epistles are vague and not numerous. There is no necessity to suppose that the ideas of justification, faith, and works, were only Pauline ideas; they might have been prevalent in the Christian church, as expressions of its belief; and, indeed, they were not unknown among the Jews. The reference to Abraham's justification would be natural to any Jewish writer in discussing the relation of faith to justification, for it is one of the few instances in the Old Testament where faith is mentioned in such a relation. What James combats may have been, not any perversion of Pauline views, but the old opinion of the Pharisees introduced into the Christian church, that mere external privileges, an orthodox creed, and the performance of certain outward religious services, would ensure salvation, independently of a holy life.

We are therefore inclined to agree with those who would assign the date of this Epistle to a period prior to the promulgation of the Pauline doctrine of justification: indeed to suppose it possible that it may have been written even before the Council of Jerusalem. There is in it no allusion to Gentile Christians, as if Christianity was then chiefly restricted to the Jews; nor is there any mention of those divisions which arose, in consequence of the numerous conversions of the Gentiles, between Jewish and Gentile Christians concerning the validity of the Mosaic law. This can easily be accounted for on the supposition that such divisions had not then arisen, and that Jewish Christianity was then predominant. At an early period, when the gospel had only commenced to be preached to the Gentiles, when Paul and Barnabas had only set out on their first missionary journey, most of the Christian Churches must have been composed of Jewish Christians, who would be identical with those Jews of the

[1] The local colouring of the Epistle is also adverted to by Hug in his Introduction, vol. ii. sec. cxlviii.

dispersion beyond Judea, to whom James wrote.[1] We read that, in consequence of the persecution that arose about Stephen, those that were scattered abroad travelled as far as Phenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but to the Jews only (Acts xi. 19). Afterwards, in consequence of the conversion of the Gentiles, the Jewish element would be swallowed up, and beyond Palestine there is no mention of Jewish Christian churches, although it is not improbable that some of them may have existed in Syria and Babylonia. Although we can attain to no certainty on this point, yet an early date is more probable than a late one, and on this supposition we would assign the composition of this Epistle to somewhere between the years 45 and 50. In that case, this Epistle is one of the earliest, if not the very earliest, of the books of the New Testament.

SECT. IV.—DESIGN OF THE EPISTLE.

The design of the Epistle has already been indicated in considering the condition of the readers. It was to correct certain errors in practice into which the Jewish Christians had fallen, to warn them against apostasy, and to establish them in the faith amid the temptations to which they were exposed. It is observable that the faults which James censures are such as we know then prevailed among the Jews. The Jewish Christians, when they embraced Christianity, had not divested themselves of their Jewish character; their old nature was not thus so easily laid aside. Thus James reproves them for their covetousness—their eager desire to buy and sell and get gain (iv. 13); for their formalism—relying on their belief in the unity of God, the great article of the Jewish religion, without a corresponding practice (iii. 19); for their oppression—the rich refusing to pay the labourers their hire (v. 4); for their meanness, their sycophancy toward the rich (ii. 3); for their falsehood, their disregard of oaths (v. 12); and for their fatalism, laying the blame of their faults upon God (i. 13).

The design of this Epistle is ethical, not doctrinal. James does not, like Paul, insist upon or develop the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; he supposes them known, and he builds upon them practical Christianity. He dwells upon the government of the tongue, the sin of worldliness, the observance of the moral law; in short, the utter worthlessness of faith without works: he inculcates the principle of that pure and undefiled worship which consists in doing good to others, and in keeping ourselves pure in the world (i. 27). Hence there is in the Epistle a comparative want of Christian doctrine. James does not insist on the atonement, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the work of the Spirit. Our Lord's sufferings are hardly alluded to: even the name of our Saviour occurs only twice (i. 1, ii. 1). On the other hand, there is nothing in the Epistle at variance with the exalted and divine nature of Christ, but rather the reverse. James calls himself 'the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ' (i. 1), thus maintaining a unity between God and Christ; he speaks of Him as the Lord of glory (ii. 1), exalted above all human power and dignity; he adverts to the coming of the Lord (v. 7, 8), and evidently designates Him as the Judge of the world (v. 8, 9). At the same time, even when James touches

[1] Dr. Erdmann supposes that the Epistle was written even before the formation of the Gentile church at Antioch, when consequently almost all the Christians would be Jews and Jewish converts. These churches of the dispersion would necessarily be closely connected with the church of Jerusalem, over which James presided, so that he may be considered as having a pastoral oversight over them.

on doctrine, it is not for the sake of the doctrine, but always with reference to practice. Thus he speaks of justification, in order to : how the inseparable connection between faith and holiness. The Epistle, in its purely ethical tendency, bears a very close resemblance to the Sermon on the Mount: many of the precepts and illustrations are the same as those found in that greatest of discourses.[1] Not that the writer of this Epistle saw the Gospel of Matthew; but the words of Jesus, orally repeated before any Gospel was written, were impressed upon his memory, and influenced his diction.

The style of this Epistle is very marked and original; it bears no resemblance to any other writing in the New Testament; the nearest approach to it in sententious sentiments and detached maxims is the Book of Proverbs. There is a great freshness and vividness about it; the writer is rich in illustrations, which are always appropriate and impressive. There is a directness in his address; the persons whom he addresses are brought forward, and spoken to, as if they were present. In his animadversions he uses strong expressions; his stern sense of duty gives rise to a great severity in his rebukes; he is full of zeal and moral indignation at all iniquity; he does not spare the faults of those to whom he writes; and his denunciations often resemble the indignant reproaches of the Old Testament prophets. To him no faith, no profession, no assertion is of any value unless accompanied with holiness of life.

It is not easy to give a connected statement of the train of thought in this Epistle. There is no logical connection, as in the Epistles of Paul; the sentences are often detached, and do not follow one another in a regular order. James commences his Epistle by alluding to the trials to which his readers were exposed; these, if patiently endured, were to be to them a source of joy, and were an occasion of blessedness; but they must beware of attributing their yielding to temptation to God, for He is the source of all good and not of evil; more especially it was of His goodness that they were born again by the gospel. It becomes them to be diligent hearers of the gospel, in order that they might reduce to practice its precepts. Religion does not consist in the performance of ceremonies, but in active benevolence and personal purity (Jas. i.). They must not envy the rich, nor despise the poor, but practise their religion without respect of persons. The royal law of love teaches them to love their neighbour as themselves. Faith without love, showing itself in acts of benevolence, is dead. Such a faith, if it hath not works, cannot justify. To no purpose do they believe in God, unless their faith is accompanied with holiness of life (Jas. ii.). Especially must they cultivate that branch of holiness which consists in the government of the tongue; this will require their utmost care; they must avoid all strife and bitter envy, and cultivate that heavenly wisdom which is pure and peaceable; the result of holiness is not contention, but peace (Jas. iii.). On the other hand, all their fightings and strifes arise from those sinful lusts which exist within them; these they must overcome; they must resist the devil; they must cleanse their hands and purify their hearts; they must humble themselves before

[1] The following is a list of parallelisms as given by Huther :—

Jas. i. 2	compared with	Matt. v. 10–12.	
,, i. 4	,,	,, v. 48.	
,, i. 5, v. 15	,,	,, vii. 7–12.	
,, i. 9	,,	,, v. 3.	
,, i. 20	,,	,, v. 22.	
,, ii. 13	,,	,, vi. 14, 15, v. 7.	
,, ii. 14–16	,,	,, vii. 21–23.	
Jas. iii. 17, 18	compared with	Matt. v. 9.	
,, iv. 10	,,	,, v. 3, 4.	
,, iv. 11	,,	,, vii. 1, 2.	
,, v. 2	,,	,, vi. 19.	
,, v. 10	,,	,, v. 12.	
,, v. 12	,,	,, v. 33–37.	

God, and not judge one another. Religion is also trust in God; in everything it behoves them to exercise dependence on God, and to acknowledge Him even in their worldly undertakings (Jas. iv.). The rich are especially warned, in a stern apostrophe, of their oppressions and wantonness; whilst those suffering from their oppressions are exhorted to patient waiting for the coming of the Lord; they are to take the prophets for examples of patient endurance of sufferings. In all things, and in every condition, they must abound in prayer, and seek to reclaim their erring brethren, for in so doing they would hide a multitude of sins (Jas. v.).

Sect. V.—The Authenticity of the Epistle.

The Epistle of James did not receive the same speedy and general acceptance as the Epistles of Paul. The testimonies in its favour among the ancient fathers are comparatively few. Eusebius classes it among the disputed epistles (*H. E.* iii. 25); and it did not receive universal acceptance until the close of the fourth century. It is well known that at the Reformation its authority was disputed, and that Luther, from subjective reasons, viewed it in an unfavourable light.

The reasons of this dubiety with regard to the authenticity of this Epistle are easily accounted for. There was a certain doubtfulness as to its author. James the Lord's brother, to whom it was generally ascribed, although a person of great importance in the early church, was not an apostle, and hence he was regarded as inferior to most of the other writers of the New Testament. The Epistle was primarily addressed to the Jewish Christians, and thus would for some time be confined to a narrow circle of readers; and, besides, there was in the early ages a prejudice among the Gentile Christians against their Jewish brethren. Most of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity were omitted in the Epistle, and hence it was regarded as of inferior importance to those epistles which contained a development of Christian doctrine; it was considered to belong rather to the law than to the gospel. And especially the statements in it appeared to be opposed to the teaching of Paul. These circumstances hindered the general recognition of this Epistle; but, as has been remarked, 'so much the more valuable are those recognitions of its genuineness and canonicity which we do meet with.'

Still, however, this Epistle is not without external testimonies in its favour.[1] There are probable allusions to it in the writings of the fathers Clemens Romanus, Hermas, Irenæus, and Tertullian, in the second century. Origen, in the third century, is the first who ascribes it to James; he speaks of it as the Epistle attributed to James. But the chief external testimony in its favour is that it is inserted in the Peshito or early Syriac translation, made in the middle of the second century, although that translation omits some other books of Scripture (2 Pet., 2 and 3 John, and Jude). The Syriac church was in the best position to judge of its authenticity. It was especially to the Jewish churches in Syria that this Epistle was addressed; and, therefore, its being recognised by the Syriac church is a strong proof in its favour.

The internal evidence is even stronger than the external. If it were a forgery, the author would not be described merely as 'James, the servant of God.' Other titles would be attached to his name, as 'James the Lord's brother,' in order to pave

[1] It has been plausibly asserted that the earliest testimony in favour of the Epistle of James is the references to it in 1 Peter. Comp. 1 Pet. i. 6, 7 with Jas. i. 2, 3; 1 Pet. i. 24 with Jas. i. 10; 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2 with Jas. i. 21; 1 Pet. iv. 8 with Jas. v. 20; 1 Pet. v. 5, 6 with Jas. iv. 6, 10; 1 Pet. v. 8, 9 with Jas. iv. 7.

the way for the reception of the writing by the authority of the name of its author. The difference between it and the non-apostolic writings is immense, and its undisputed superiority is an argument in its favour. But, further, it is precisely such a letter as one would expect, considering the legal strictness of James, and the national feelings and temptations of the Jewish Christians. It is at once severe and indignant at sin, and earnest in the inculcation of practical religion, as we would expect in any utterance of James, the Just; and it reproves covetousness, worldliness, and Pharisaical formality, the prevalent faults in a community of Jewish Christians; for these were, even in the apostolic age, the prominent sins of the Jewish race.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF

JAMES.

CHAPTER I. 1–18.

On Temptations.

1 JAMES, [a] a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to
the twelve tribes which are [b] scattered abroad,[1] [c] greeting.
2 My brethren, [d] count it all joy when ye fall into divers
3 temptations; knowing *this*,[2] that [e] the trying[3] of your faith
4 worketh patience.[4] But let patience[4] have *her*[5] perfect work,
5 [f] that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.[6] If any
of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, [g] that giveth to all
men liberally,[7] and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.
6 But let him [h] ask in faith, [i] nothing wavering:[8] for he that
wavereth[9] is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and
7 tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any
8 thing of the Lord. A double-minded man *is*[10] unstable in all
9 his ways. Let [k] the brother of low degree[11] rejoice in that he
10 is exalted;[12] but the rich, in that he is made low:[13] [l] because
11 as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is
no sooner risen[14] [m] with a burning heat,[15] but it withereth[16] the
grass, and the flower thereof falleth,[17] and the grace of the
fashion of it perisheth:[18] so also shall the rich man fade away
12 in his ways. [n] Blessed *is* the man that [o] endureth temptation:
for when he is tried,[19] he shall receive [p] the crown of life, which
13 the Lord[20] hath promised to them that love him. Let no man
say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God
cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.
14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his [q] own

[a] Rom. i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Tit. i. 1.
[b] Jo. vii. 35; 1 Pet. i. 1.
[c] Acts xv. 23.
[d] Mat. v. 12.
[e] Rom. v. 3, 4.
[f] Mat. v. 48.
[g] Mat. vii. 7.
[h] Mat. xxi. 22.
[i] Acts x. 20.
[k] Mat. v. 3; 1 Cor. vii. 22
[l] Isa. xl. 6, 7; 1 Pet. i. 24.
[m] Mat. xx. 12.
[n] Mat. v. 10; Job v. 17.
[o] Ch. v. 11.
[p] 1 Pet. v. 4; 2 Tim. iv. 8
[q] Rom. vii. 7.

[1] in the dispersion
[2] *omit* this
[3] proof
[4] endurance
[5] a
[6] lacking in nothing
[7] simply
[8] doubting
[9] doubteth
[10] He is a double-minded man
[11] who is lowly
[12] glory in his exaltation
[13] in his humiliation
[14] For the sun arose
[15] with its heat
[16] and withered
[17] fell
[18] perished
[19] approved
[20] He (*the best authorities omit* the Lord)

15 lust,[21] and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth
forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, [r] bringeth forth[22] death. [r] Rom. vi. 23.
16, 17 [s] Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and [s] 1 Cor. vi. 9, xv. 33.
every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down[23] from
the Father of lights, [t] with whom is no variableness, neither [t] 1 Jo. i. 5.
18 shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us [u] with the [u] 1 Pet. i. 23.
word of truth, that we should be a kind of [v] first-fruits of his [v] Rom. viii. 21–23; Rev. xiv. 4.
creatures.

[21] by his own lust [22] begetteth [23] coming down

CONTENTS. James, after saluting his readers, commences his Epistle by adverting to those trials to which they were exposed: these, if patiently endured, would confirm and strengthen them in the faith; and, as they were placed in trying circumstances, he admonishes them to ask, without doubting, wisdom from God. If, on the one hand, they successfully overcame those temptations to which their trials exposed them, they would receive the crown of life which the Lord had promised to them that love Him; but if, on the other hand, they were overcome, they must beware of attributing their sins, which arose from their own wicked desires, to God who is the Author, not of evil, but of good; and especially it was of His pure goodness that they were born again by the word of truth.

Ver. 1. **James:** the same name as the Hebrew Jacob. The James who is the author of this Epistle is the Lord's brother, known in ecclesiastical history as the bishop of Jerusalem, and was either a son of Mary and Joseph, or a son of Joseph by a previous marriage (see Introduction, sec. 1).—**a servant,** literally a bondman or a slave; the word denotes absolute subjection, but we must not associate with it the degradation and involuntary compulsion attached to our conception of slavery. A certain undefined ministerial office is perhaps implied; but the phrase, 'a servant of Christ,' has become a popular term, belonging not only to all the office-bearers of the Church, but to all Christians (1 Pet. ii. 16). We are all the servants of Jesus Christ, bound to obey His commands, and to devote ourselves to His service. Some suppose that it is a proof that James was not an apostle, because he calls himself only 'a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ;' but this supposition cannot be maintained, as Paul gives himself the same appellation in the Epistle to the Philippians (Phil. i. 1).—**of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.** Only in another place in this Epistle does James mention our Lord by name (chap. ii. 1), though elsewhere he alludes to Him (chap. v. 7, 14, 15).—**to the twelve tribes,** a common designation of the Israelites (Acts xxvi. 7). The twelve tribes were now mingled together, and formed the nation of the Jews. The name Israel was, however, still retained as being the covenant people of God; to Israel, and not specifically to the Jews, were the promises made (Rom ix. 4).—**which are scattered abroad,** or more exactly, 'that are in the dispersion.' The Dispersion, or the Diaspora, was the name given to those Jews or Israelites who resided in foreign lands beyond the boundaries of Palestine. This Epistle was not written primarily to the Gentile Christians, or to the Jews generally, but to the Christian Jews of the dispersion—to those who are elsewhere called Hellenists (see Introduction, sec. 2). The Jews were everywhere 'scattered abroad.' Josephus says that it was not easy to find an eminent place in the whole world where the Jews did not reside; and the same observation holds good in the present day.—**greeting,** or 'wishes joy.' The usual Greek form of salutation. It is found at the commencement of no other apostolic Epistle, but occurs in the Epistle drawn up by James, addressed to the Gentile churches, at the council of Jerusalem (Acts xv. 23), over which James seems to have presided.

Ver. 2. **My brethren:** the constant form of address in this Epistle: his readers were his brethren, both on account of their nationality and of their Christian faith; both in the flesh and in the Lord.—**count it all joy,** that is, complete or pure joy—a joy which excludes trouble and sorrow. Some suppose a reference here to the greeting of James, wherein he wishes his readers joy.—**when ye fall into,** when ye become unexpectedly surrounded or encompassed by. The idea of surprise is here to be taken into account. Trials are not to be sought for or rushed into; believers fall into them.—**divers temptations.** The adjective 'divers' does not indicate the different sources from which the temptations proceed, but rather the different forms which they assume. Temptations are generally regarded in two points of view—enticements to sin, and trials or tests of character; here it is evident that they are chiefly regarded in the latter point of view, though the former is not excluded (see note to ver. 13). They are outward trials as contrasted with inward temptations to evil. St. James may primarily allude to those trials to which, in the form of persecution, the Jewish Christians were exposed from their unbelieving countrymen; but the epithet 'divers' would appear to include temptations or trials of all kinds. It is not the mere falling into trials that is the cause of joy; but the beneficial effects which result from them, as is evident from the verse which follows.

Ver. 3. **Knowing this**—being well assured of the fact, the reason or ground of the joy.—**that the trying.** These temptations are regarded as the tests or proofs of faith, and in this consists their value. By them faith is being tested as gold in the furnace, and is thus recognised and purified.—**of your faith:** of your firm confidence and trust in the Gospel. Faith here is not used objectively for the doctrines of Christianity; but

subjectively for our personal persuasion of the truth of the Gospel.—**worketh**, produceth, **patience**. By patience here is not meant so much freedom from murmuring and repining, as endurance—stedfastness or perseverance in the faith of the Gospel under these temptations. The Jewish Christians by their trials were tempted to apostatize from Christianity. A period of trial is a period of testing; the true metal is purified, not consumed. Those who are true believers stand the trial; the trying of their faith produceth endurance. Those who are not true believers fall away; 'in time of temptation,' says our Lord, 'they fall away' (Luke viii. 13). With respect to joy in temptation, because it produceth patience, compare the language of St. Paul: 'We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience (endurance), and patience experience (approval),' (Rom. v. 3, 4).

Ver. 4. **But let patience**, or endurance, **have her perfect**—not only in the sense of enduring to the end, but of completeness—**work**. Patience is not merely a passive but an active virtue; there is a work of patience, yea a perfect work. And this work consists in the purification of the soul—in refining and ennobling our moral character. Patience under trials has pre-eminently a sanctifying tendency. The most perfect Christians are not the most active, but the most enduring; not so much in the bustle of the world is the work of grace carried on, as in the quietness of the sick-chamber. God proves His people in the furnace of affliction. He purges the fruitful branches that they may bear more fruit (John xv. 2).—**that ye may be perfect**. 'The work of God in a man,' as Dean Alford observes, '*is* the man. If God's teaching by patience have had a perfect work in you, *you* are perfect.' Of course by this cannot be meant absolute perfection; the word denotes maturity in grace, not absolute but relative holiness.—**and entire**. Perfect and entire are almost synonymous terms; perfect denotes that which has attained to its maturity, entire that which is complete in all its parts. Compare Acts iii. 16.—**wanting nothing**—or 'in nothing lacking,' a negative expression for the sake of strengthening these two positive attributes—perfect and entire.

Ver. 5. **If**. The connection of this verse with the preceding is not very obvious. It may be as follows: You may by your trials be thrown into a state of perplexity; you may want wisdom; if so, ask it of God.—**any of you lack wisdom**, perhaps suggested by the previous expression 'wanting or lacking nothing,' the verb in both verses being the same in the Greek. By wisdom here may be primarily meant wisdom or prudence in the present trying circumstances of the Jewish Christians; wisdom to bear their afflictions well. But the word is not to be confined to this; it denotes spiritual wisdom in general, not mere human wisdom or learning, but that 'wisdom which cometh from above,' and which is an essential foundation of Christian conduct. James, in writing to Jewish converts, might well suppose them acquainted from their sacred books with the true nature of wisdom, which was regarded by them as almost synonymous with religion. Wisdom was especially necessary to Christians in their temptations, to convert them from being incitements to sin to be occasions of Christian perfection.—**let him ask of God that giveth**, or more literally, 'of God, the Giver.'—**to all men liberally**. The word rendered 'liberally' denotes simply, with simplicity, and intimates either that God gives from the pure love of giving, or without exacting any conditions. God does not give as man does, grudgingly and restricting His gifts, but simply, that is, freely and graciously.—**and upbraideth not**: without reproaches. Not as man who upbraids the petitioner on account of his unworthiness, or of his past misconduct, or of his abuse of former gifts. God in His giving upbraideth not; He does not reproach us with our past faults. 'After thou hast given,' says the wise son of Sirach, 'do not upbraid' (Sirach xli. 22).—**and it shall be given him**, namely, wisdom, the object of his request (comp. 1 Kings iii. 9–12).

Ver. 6. **But**, as an essential prerequisite to our obtaining an answer to our prayers.—**let him ask in faith**; that is, not believing that God will give us the precise thing that we ask, for we may ask for what is pernicious to us, but believing that God hears prayer. The object of prayer is here presupposed, namely, wisdom; and this we may ask without limitation, as it is a blessing which is always proper for God to give, and fit for us to receive.—**nothing wavering**, or more simply and correctly, 'doubting nothing.' It is the same expression as occurs in Acts x. 20 in the address of the Spirit to Peter: 'Arise, get thee down and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.' Here the expression means 'not doubting that God hears prayer.' The nature of this doubting is well stated by Huther in his excellent commentary: 'To doubt is not equivalent to "disbelieve," but includes in it the essential character of unbelief; whilst faith says "yes," and unbelief "no," to doubt is the conjuction of "yes" and "no," but so that "no" has the preponderance; it is an internal wavering which leans not to faith, but to unbelief.'—**For he that wavereth**, or doubteth, **is like a wave of the sea**: there is in the original no play upon words, as in our English Version.—**driven of the wind and tossed**. These terms are synonymous, and do not, as some think, refer to outward and inward temptations (Erdmann). The figure which St. James employs is striking. The mind of the doubter is unsteady and wavering; like a wave, sometimes advancing and sometimes receding; there is wanting rest and calmness. It is in stillness that God communicates His grace; unrest is adverse to His operations.

Ver. 7. **For let not that man**, namely, the doubter, **think**. This warning supposes that the doubter fancies that he will receive an answer to his prayers; but it is a vain delusion: his expectations will be disappointed.—**that he shall receive anything of the Lord**. By the Lord is here meant not Christ, but God. James, as the Septuagint does, here uses the term as equivalent to Jehovah. This is the usual meaning of the term in this Epistle; it is applied to Christ only in v. 7, 14, 15. In the Epistles of the other apostles the term 'Lord' generally denotes Christ.

Ver. 8. In this verse it is to be observed that the word 'is' is in italics, and therefore is not in the original. The verse ought to be translated: 'He,' that is, the doubter, 'is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.'—**a double-minded man**—literally, a two-souled man. Double-mindedness is here used not in the sense of duplicity, but

of dubiousness and indecision—a man whose affections are divided between God and the world, or between faith and unbelief, who has, as it were, two minds—the one directed to God, and the other to the world. The man is not a hypocrite; he is a waverer in his religion.—**is unstable in all his ways.** This necessarily arises from his double-mindedness. Where there is a want of unity in the internal life, it is also wanting in the external life (Huther). The man is actuated sometimes by one impulse, and sometimes by another; and thus will be perpetually running into inconsistencies of conduct. He wants decision of character. On such a man there is no dependence; he has no fixedness of purpose, and is destitute of that holy earnestness that adds dignity to the character.

Ver. 9. The meaning of this and of the following verse has been much disputed.—**Let.** The connection with the preceding is not obvious. It appears to be this: We must avoid all doubting of God in prayer, all double-mind.dness; we must exercise confidence in Him, and realize His gracious dealings in all the dispensations of His Providence; and, whether rich or poor, we must place implicit trust in Him.—**the brother:** here evidently the Christian brother, because Christianity unites all those who embrace it into one holy brotherhood.—**of low degree**—literally, 'who is lowly.' The word in itself does not necessarily involve the idea of poverty; but here, where the contrast is with the rich, it must denote 'poor' or 'afflicted'—the poor brother. The majority of the early Christians were from among the poor; and it is probable that the unbelieving Jews by fines and extortions deprived their believing brethren of their goods. Poverty was a frequent form of persecution for conscience' sake.—**rejoice in that he is exalted**—literally, 'glory in his exaltation.' Different meanings have been assigned to this phrase. The usual interpretation is to refer it to spiritual exaltation: Let the poor brother rejoice in the dignity and glory which as a Christian he possesses, in those spiritual riches which are conferred upon him, and in the crown of life which is in reserve for him. He is constituted a child of God and an heir of heaven. Doubtless many who were slaves in the world were the Lord's freedmen. This dignity was a proper subject for glorying in, as it was conferred on them not because of their own merits, but from the Divine graciousness. May not the words, however, admit of a more extended and literal signification? The poor are permitted to rejoice when they become rich, because they are thus possessed of greater means of usefulness, and are the better enabled to promote the cause of Christ. Voluntary poverty is no virtue; money may be redeemed from the world and deposited in the treasury of the Lord.

Ver. 10. **But the rich.** Some suppose that by the rich here is meant the unbeliever; not the rich brother, but the rich man; and accordingly they understand the words either as ironical, 'Let the rich man rejoice in—let him glory in—what is in reality his shame, his humiliation;' or as a statement of fact, 'The rich man rejoices in his humiliation,' in his riches, which shall perish. But such a meaning appears to be forced and unnatural. The most natural meaning is to take the word 'brother' as a general term, which is specified by the lowly and the rich. The rich man, then, is here the Christian brother. Although **most** of the early Christians were poor, yet there were several among them who were rich; and to them there were addressed special exhortations; as when St. Paul says: 'Charge them that are rich not to trust in uncertain riches' (1 Tim. vi. 17). The word 'rejoice' or 'glory' has to be supplied: Let the rich brother glory **in that he is made low**: literally, 'in his humiliation.' There is here also the same diversity of meaning as in the former verse. It is usually understood of humility of spirit: 'Let the wealthy brother rejoice in that lowliness of spirit which the Gospel has conferred upon him:' that by being made conscious of the vanity of earthly riches, he has been induced to seek after the true riches; to cultivate that spiritual abasement which is the prelude of true exaltation. Although rich in this world, yet as a Christian he is poor in spirit, and clothed with humility. Others refer it to a rich man being stripped of his possessions by persecution for the sake of the Gospel: 'Let him glory in being thus deprived of his worldly wealth.' Perhaps the words may also be taken in their most literal meaning: 'Let the rich brother rejoice when he becomes poor,' when he is reduced from affluence to poverty, because he is then freed from the snares and temptations of riches. This is indeed a high attainment in piety, but it is one which has been made by many of the children of God. Riches are too frequently an obstacle to salvation; and when taken away, believers may have abundant reason to thank God that that obstacle has been removed. **because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.** A common figure in the O. T., expressive of the instability of earthly blessings. 'All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth' (Isa. xl. 6, 7).

Ver. 11. **For the sun is no sooner risen.** In the original the words are in the lively style of a narrative: 'For the sun arose.'—**with a burning heat.** The word here rendered 'burning heat' is often used in the Septuagint to denote the hot east wind: and hence many suppose that the simoom or the sirocco is meant, which, blowing from the hot sands of Arabia, burns up all vegetation. But it is better to refer it to the heat of the sun, which in Palestine is very scorching: hence, 'for the sun arose with its heat.'—**but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth**: or rather, 'and it withered the grass, and the flower thereof fell, and the loveliness of its form perished:' it converted the rich and luxuriant field into an arid waste.—**so also shall the rich man**: not the rich brother, that is the Christian, but the rich man generally: St. James is here speaking of the transient nature of the earthly riches. He who trusts in earthly riches shall fade away like the flower of the field.—**fade away in his ways:** in his goings, when actively engaged in his worldly pursuits or pleasures. Death snatches us away from the objects of worldly ambition.

Ver. 12. **Blessed is the man that endureth temptations:** not merely falleth into divers temptations, but endureth them, cometh out of them unscathed, does not succumb under them. A man who has been tempted, and has come victorious out of the temptation, is a far nobler man than one who preserves a moral character, because he has never been tempted. Tempta-

tions impart a manliness, a strength, a vigour to virtue. Victory over temptation is a higher attainment than untried innocence. Untried innocence is the negative innocence of children: righteousness approved by trial is the positive holiness of apostles, martyrs, and confessors. 'Behold,' says St. James elsewhere, 'we count them happy that endure' (v. 11).—**for**, the reason assigned for this blessedness.—**when he is tried**, or rather, when he is approved by the trial, so that he is able to stand the test and to be purified by it.—**he shall receive the crown of life.** If these words were found in one of St. Paul's Epistles, the reference would be to the Grecian games—to the crown of laurel which was bestowed on the victor in these games. But here there can be no such reference; as these games were discountenanced by the Jews, and regarded as polluting. The reference is to the conqueror's crown, or to the royal diadem; it is a figure not uncommon in the O. T. (Ps. xxi. 3). So also in the Book of Wisdom: 'The righteous live for evermore, their reward also is with the Lord, therefore shall they receive a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand' (Wisdom v. 16, 17). As has been beautifully said: 'Earthly trials are the flowers of which the heavenly garland is made' (Bishop Wordsworth). The genitive is that of apposition: life is itself the crown **which the Lord**, not Christ, but God, **hath promised to them that love him.** To endure temptation is a proof of love to God. It is attachment to His cause which induces us to endure.

Ver. 13. **Let no man say when he is tempted.** The connexion is: if, instead of enduring the temptation, we yield to it and are overcome by it, we must not lay the blame of our fall from virtue upon God. Hitherto the word 'temptation' has been used chiefly in the sense of tests of character; here it denotes solicitations to sin; and yet there is hardly any change of meaning, as some think. These two views of temptation involve each other; what is a test of character may also be a solicitation to sin. Temptations may be considered as either external or internal. The trials which occur in the course of life, the afflictions which befall us, the persecutions to which religion may expose us, are external temptations and tests of character. But when these draw out our sinful desires and excite to sinful actions, they become internal, and are solicitations to evil. In themselves, temptations are not sins; when resisted and overcome, they are promoters of virtue; it is in our voluntary yielding to the temptations, in the consent of the will, that sin arises.—**I am tempted of God**, or rather, 'from God,' denoting not the direct agency in the temptation, but the source from which that agency proceeds. It is improbable that there is any reference here to the doctrine of the Pharisees concerning fate; rather, the reference is to that common perversity in human nature which attempts to throw the blame of our faults upon God: that the temptations to which we were exposed, and in consequence of which we fell, were occasioned by God, being caused either by the circumstances in which His providence has placed us, or by that temperament with which He has created us (cp. Gen. iii. 12).—**for God cannot be tempted with evil.** Some render these words: 'God is unversed in evil things'—inexperienced in them; all evil is completely foreign to His nature.—**neither tempteth he any man**: that is, to evil, to do what is wrong. God certainly tempts in the sense of tries. But the design of the Divine trying is not to excite to sin, not that sin should arise, but that it should be overcome; He tries our virtues, in order that they may be purified; He designs by these trials our moral improvement. The external tests of character may be from God; but the internal solicitations to evil are from ourselves.

Ver. 14. **But every man** who is tempted **is tempted**, namely to evil, **when he is drawn away of his own lust.** By lust here is meant evil desires in general. The doctrine of human depravity is assumed rather than asserted. St. James is not speaking here of the original source of sin in the human race, but of the cause of temptation to evil. These solicitations, he observes, arise from within; they have their origin in our evil desires; our passions are the occasion of our yielding to temptation.—**and enticed**; literally, allured as a fish by a bait. Some suppose that the apostle by these two terms, 'drawn away' and 'enticed,' denotes drawn away from good and enticed to evil; but this is putting more into these words than they contain. St. James, then, here tells us where to lay the blame of our temptation or incitement to sin; certainly not on God, for He tempteth no man to evil; but on ourselves—on those sinful propensities which exist within us. It is we ourselves that yield. We sin simply because we choose to sin. Even Satan can only tempt; he cannot constrain men to commit evil.

Ver. 15. **Then.** Now follows the genesis of sin.—**when lust**, evil desire, **hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.** Lust is here considered as a harlot who seduces the will, and sin is the consequence of this unhallowed alliance. Sin is the child of our corrupt passions; it has its origin in our evil desires; it is the outcome of inward depravity. First, there is evil desire in the heart, and then by the will yielding to that evil desire there is sin in the life.—**and sin when it is finished**, fully developed or matured. There is no distinction here between the internal and the external act; as if it were sin in the form of the external act which worketh death. St. James speaks of sin in general, whether in the heart or in the life. Sin may be developed in the heart as well as in the conduct. — **bringeth forth**, or begetteth, as the two verbs are different in the original, **death.** Lust is the mother of sin and death its progeny. (Cp. Milton's sublime allegory in *Paradise Lost*, Book ii. 745–814.) Death here does not denote only physical or temporal death, but, as the contrast is to the crown of life which God has promised to them that love Him, it must include eternal death. Cp. the statement of St. Paul: 'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life' (Rom. xi. 23).

Ver. 16. **Do not err**—a common Pauline expression, elsewhere always translated, 'Be not deceived.' Here it refers rather to what precedes than to what follows. Be not deceived in this matter, in supposing that temptation to evil comes from God.—**my beloved brethren**, strengthening the exhortation.

Ver. 17. **Every good gift.** A positive proof of the assertion that God tempteth no man. Not only does evil not proceed from Him, but He is the source only of good. All good is from God.

Our higher and spiritual good evidently arises from Him: all good works are the effects of Divine impulses. Our lower and earthly good also comes from Him: our health, our property, our domestic comforts, are the gifts of His bounty. Our very trials, our disappointments, our afflictions, our sicknesses—those tests of character are the proofs of His goodness, and are designed to produce within us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The statement is true taken in its most universal application. —**and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down** (more literally, 'Every perfect gift descendeth from above,' or 'is from above, coming down') **from the Father of lights.** By lights here are primarily meant the heavenly bodies, and by the Father is denoted their Author or Creator; but it may well be applied to all spiritual existences—the souls of men and angelic spirits. As Bishop Wordsworth beautifully expresses it: 'God is the Father of all lights: the light of the natural world, the sun, the moon and stars, shining in the heavens; the light of reason and conscience; the light of His law; the light of prophecy, shining in a dark place; the light of the Gospel, shining throughout the world; the light of apostles, martyrs, and confessors, preaching the Gospel to all nations; the light of the Holy Ghost, shining in our hearts; the light of the heavenly city: God is the Father of them all. He is the everlasting Father of the everlasting Son, who is the Light of the world.' —**with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.** St. James does not here employ, as some suppose, technical astronomical terms, which would not be understood by his readers, but alludes to what is apparent to all—the waning and setting of the natural lights in the firmament. The statement is obviously equivalent to that of St. John: 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all' (1 John i. 5).

Ver. 18. **Of his own will**—'After the counsel of His own will,' as St. Paul expresses it (Eph. i. 11). Regeneration is here alluded to as the highest instance of the Divine goodness. It is not a necessary act of God, but proceeds from His own free will.—**begat he us.** It is evident from what follows that spiritual and not natural birth is here referred to: believers are begotten of God (John i. 13).—**with the word of truth**: the instrument of our regeneration, namely the Gospel, so called because truth is inherent in it. Some erroneously interpret the word here as signifying the Logos, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ; but this is exclusively an expression of St. John.—**that we should be a kind of first-fruits**: a Jewish form of expression taken from the custom of presenting the first-fruits to God. Christians are here called 'first-fruits' because they are consecrated to God, dedicated to the praise of His glory. Those Jewish Christians also, to whom St. James wrote, might be regarded as the first-fruits of Christianity, being the first converts to Christ, and the earnest of the spiritual harvest—the vast increase of converts from the Gentile world.—**of his creatures**: of the new creation, that great multitude of the redeemed whom no man can number: and perhaps not even to be limited to them, but to embrace all the creatures of God, pointing forward to that time when 'the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God' (Rom. viii. 21).

CHAPTER I. 19–27.

Hearing and Doing the Word.

19 WHEREFORE, my beloved brethren, let every man be
20 [a] swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the
21 wrath of man worketh not [b] the righteousness of God. [c] Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness,[1] and receive with meekness[2] the engrafted[3] word, [d] which is
22 able to save your souls: but be ye [e] doers of the word, and not
23 hearers only, [f] deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man
24 beholding his natural face [g] in a glass:[4] for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what
25 manner of man he was. But whoso [h] looketh into the perfect [i] law of liberty, and continueth *therein*,[5] he [6] being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the [7] work, this man shall be [k] blessed in his deed.[8]

[a] Sir. v. 11.
[b] Rom. x. 3.
[c] 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.
[d] Acts x. 32; Rom. i. 16.
[e] Rom. ii. 13; Mat. vii. 21.
[f] Rev. iii. 17.
[g] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
[h] 1 Pet. i. 12.
[i] Rom. vii. 22, viii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 17.
[k] Lu. xi. 28.

[1] abundance of malice
[2] mildness
[3] implanted
[4] mirror
[5] *omit* therein
[6] *omit* he
[7] *omit* the
[8] doing

26 If any man among you seem to be religious,[9] and bridleth
not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's [l] reli- [l] Acts xxvi. 5; Col. ii. 18.
27 gion[10] is vain. Pure religion[10] and undefiled before [m] God [m] Eph. v. 20.
and the Father is this, To visit [n] the fatherless and widows [n] Ps. lxviii. 5.
in their affliction, *and* to keep himself [o] unspotted [p] from the [o] Mat. v. 8. [p] 1 Jo. ii. 14; Jas. iv. 4.
world.

[9] thinketh himself to be a worshipper [10] worship

CONTENTS. In this passage St. James exhorts his readers to be not only hearers but doers of the word. They are to be swift to hear, and to receive the word implanted within them with freedom from malice and in mildness: but they are to hear it only with a view to practise its precepts; lest, being mere hearers of the word, they impose upon themselves. They must remember that true religious service does not consist in the performance of certain ceremonies, but in active benevolence shown especially towards the afflicted, and in purity of life.

Ver. 19. **Wherefore.** There is a diversity in the reading of this verse. The most important manuscripts, instead of 'Wherefore,' read 'Ye know,' or 'Know ye,' according as the verb is understood as indicative or imperative, referring either to what precedes, 'Ye know this,'[1] namely, that God out of His free love has begotten you with the word of truth; or to what follows, 'Know this, my beloved brethren, let every one of you be swift to hear:' equivalent to 'Hearken, my beloved brethren' (ii. 5).—**my beloved brethren**: an affectionate address, strengthening the exhortation.—**let every man be swift to hear**, namely, the word of truth, which, having been so lately mentioned, there was no necessity to repeat. The words, however, admit of a general application to the acquisition of all profitable knowledge. The same sentiment is found in the writings of the son of Sirach: 'Be swift to hear; and let thy life be sincere, and with patience give answer' (Sir. v. 11). There is no reason, however, to suppose that St. James in these words refers to this passage.—**slow to speak**: perhaps here primarily referring to teaching: Be not rash in entering upon the office of a teacher (chap. iii. 1); see that you are thoroughly prepared beforehand. But the words are a proverbial expression, admitting of general application. Men are often grieved for saying too much, seldom for saying too little. Still, however, the maxim is not to be universally adopted. Occasions may frequently occur when we shall regret that we have omitted to speak, giving a seasonable word of advice, reproof, or comfort. There is a time to speak as well as a time to keep silence (Eccles. iii. 7).—**slow to wrath.** Wrath here is not directed toward God—enmity against Him, on account of the trials which befall us; but wrath directed toward men, and especially that wrath which frequently arises from religious controversy or debate. 'The quick speaker is the quick kindler.' But the words are true generally; on all occasions we ought to be slow to wrath. Still, however, all wrath is not here forbidden. Moral indignation is a virtue, for the exercise of which there are frequent occasions; and to regard sin without anger is a proof of indifference to holiness.—Some suppose that in this sentence is contained the subject-matter of the Epistle. The former part was only introductory; now the subject of the Epistle is stated; and the remainder is divided into three parts, corresponding to 'swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath,' with an appendix at the close. The arrangement is ingenious, but is hardly borne out by the contents.

Ver. 20. **For**, the reason assigned for the above exhortation, and especially for the last portion of it—'slow to wrath.'—**the wrath of man**, that is, carnal zeal, whose fruit is not peace, but contention. Those angry feelings which arise from religious controversy are here primarily alluded to. The word of God was then abused, as it is now, into an occasion of strife.—**worketh not**, produceth not.—**the righteousness of God.** By the righteousness of God is not meant the righteousness imputed by God, as if the meaning were that the wrath of man does not work out the faith which God counts to men for righteousness; nor that righteousness which God possesses—the Divine attribute of righteousness; but that righteousness which is approved by God, and which He Himself forms within us by His Holy Spirit. The meaning of the verse is that contention, arising from dispute or controversy, is not conducive to holiness, either in ourselves or in others—does not tend to the furtherance of the righteousness of God in the soul. Furious zeal does not promote the interests of God's kingdom.

Ver. 21. **Wherefore**, seeing that the wrath of man does not promote the righteousness of God, **lay apart**, divest yourself of, **all filthiness**, pollution. By some this word is taken by itself, but it is more in accordance with the context to connect it with 'naughtiness,' indicating a particular kind of pollution.—**and superfluity**—abundance or excess.—**of naughtiness**: a word which has now lost somewhat of its original meaning. The Greek word signifies wickedness, depravity, malignity, malice,—that disposition which manifests itself in the wrath of man mentioned above; accordingly, 'all pollution and abundance of malice'—all that malice which is so polluting and abundant in our hearts. Some suppose that the words are metaphorical, having reference to agriculture, in correspondence with the ingrafted word which directly follows: Put away all the defilement and rank growth of malice which like weeds encumber the ground, and prevent the growth of the ingrafted word.—**and receive with meekness**: here, as opposed to malice and wrath, not so much a teachable spirit, as mildness—a gentle and loving disposition toward our fellow-men.—**the ingrafted word**, or rather the inplanted word—that word which by Divine grace is implanted in your hearts. By

[1] So the Revised Version.

this is meant, neither reason nor the inner light of the Mystics, but the word of truth or the Gospel of Christ as received into the heart. Some suppose that by the ingrafted word the incarnate Logos, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, is meant; but this is a fanciful supposition, and unsuitable to the context.—**which is able to save your souls.** Compare with this the words of St. Paul: 'I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them who are sanctified' (Acts xx. 32). Comp. also Rom. i. 16. James does not mean that those who are born by the word do not already possess salvation, but that the salvation is not fully possessed in this life.

Ver. 22. **But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.** The implanted word, or the word of truth, must be so heard and received as to produce a corresponding course of action. Practice, and not opinion, is the desired effect of the reception of the word. The Jews have a proverb among themselves: 'He who hears the law, and does not practise it, is like a man who ploughs and sows, but never reaps.' It is, however, to be observed that St. James does not in the slightest degree depreciate the hearing of the word; he only asserts the superior importance of the doing of the word. 'Be not only hearers of the word, but be also doers.' And indeed the hearing is in order to the doing; if this be wanting, the hearing is of no value. Compare with this the words of St. Paul: 'Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of it shall be justified' (Rom. ii. 13).—**deceiving your own selves.** The term denotes deceiving by false and sophistical reasoning. He who is a hearer of the word and not a doer, and who thinketh that this is sufficient, imposeth upon his own self. And of all deceptions, self-deception is the worst. If a man were deceived by others, it would be comparatively easy to undeceive him, by placing things in their true light. But if a man be deceived by himself, it is next to impossible to undeceive him, because prejudices have blinded his eyes; the bandage must first be removed before he can see the light.

Ver. 23. **For.** The above exhortation is enforced by a comparison. A hearer of the word, who is not a doer, resembles a man seeing his face in a mirror, without its making any permanent impression upon him.—**if any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face**: literally, 'the countenance of his birth,—that face with which he was born; and therefore here well translated 'his natural face.' The word for 'beholding' literally denotes 'contemplating:' it does not involve the idea of a passing glance, which is suggested by what follows.—**in a glass,** or mirror. The ancients had no looking-glasses properly so called; their mirrors were usually made of polished metals. In them objects could be but dimly discerned: 'Now we see through a glass darkly' (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

Ver. 24. **For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth.** The words are in the lively style of narrative: literally translated they are: 'For he contemplated himself, and has gone his way, and immediately forgot what manner of man he was.' A general statement, not necessarily to be understood universally. A man has seldom any true or accurate notion of his own features: from beholding himself in a glass or mirror, he retains no distinct recollection of what he has seen.—**what manner of man he was.** No distinct impression is made on him; he cannot recall his own features. This must especially have been the case, when we take into consideration the imperfect nature of the mirrors of the ancients.

Ver. 25. Now follows the application of the metaphor.—**But.** The doer of the word is now described. — **whoso looketh into**: literally, 'stoopeth down to look into,' representing the earnest inspection: 'whoso fixedly contemplateth' (comp. 1 Pet. i. 12; John xx. 5).—**the perfect law of liberty**: corresponding to the glass in the metaphor, the same as the word of truth or the implanted word, namely, the Gospel of Christ. By this, then, is not meant the natural law, nor the moral law as such, but the Gospel in so far as it becomes a law of life and morals. There is hardly any implied contrast between the law of Moses and the Gospel. The moral law itself was a perfect law: it was the transcript of the Divine character; and, of all the writers of the New Testament, St. James would be the last to depreciate it. But the perfection which belongs to the Gospel is that it is 'the law of liberty.' This could not be said of the Mosaic law: in many respects, it was a law of bondage (Gal. v. 1). The moral law was a rule of conduct—a law of commands and prohibitions—a law which by reason of its violation brought all men under sentence of condemnation. But the Gospel is a law of liberty: it not only delivers man from condemnation, but, by implanting within him a new disposition, it causes him of his own free will and choice to obey the moral law; it not only imparts to him the power of obedience, but the will to obey: the law of God is written on his heart: obedience to it is not so much a yoke as a pleasure: 'he delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man' (Rom. vii. 22). The perfect law of liberty, then, is not lawlessness; on the contrary, it is holiness—a disposition to obedience—'the moral law transfigured by love.' 'As long,' observes Calvin, 'as the law is preached by the external voice of man, and not inscribed by the finger and Spirit of God on the heart, it is but a dead letter, and as it were a lifeless thing. It is then no wonder that the law is deemed imperfect, and that it is a law of bondage: for, as St. Paul teaches, separated from Christ, it generates to bondage, and can do nothing but fill us with diffidence and fear.'—**and continueth therein.** The word 'therein' is in italics, and not in the original. The meaning therefore is not 'and continueth in the law,' but 'and continueth to look.'—**he being not a forgetful hearer**: literally, a hearer of forgetfulness, to whom forgetfulness as a property belongs.—**but a doer of the work**: literally, 'a doer of work,' with the omission of the article; 'work' is added to 'doer,' in order to give greater prominence to the doing: or taken as a Hebraism, 'an active doer.'—**this man is blessed in his deed,** or rather, 'in his doing.' The righteous shall be rewarded for their doing: to those on the right hand, the King will say, 'Well done.' The point of comparison then is evident. The word of God, especially in its moral requirements, is the glass, in which a man may behold his moral countenance, wherein the imperfections of his character may be clearly

discerned. Both to the mere hearer of the word and to the doer of the word, the Gospel is compared to a glass, wherein a man may behold his natural face: but whereas the one sees his imperfections, and immediately forgets them; the other not only sees, but endeavours to remove them. 'Blessed,' says our Saviour, 'are they that hear the word of God and keep it' (Luke xi. 28).

Ver. 26. **If any man among you seem**, that is, not seems to others, but thinketh himself, appears to himself to be religious. The words denote the false opinion which a man has of himself; the false estimate which he has formed of his religion. —**to be religious.** 'Religious' and 'religion' are hardly the correct renderings. Both are, however, adopted in the Revised Version without note. We have no terms in our language to express the original; worshipper and worship is perhaps the nearest approach. See Col. ii. 18. See Trench's *New Testament Synonyms*, pp. 192 ff. It is not internal religion to which St. James alludes, but the manifestation of religion, the service of God or religious worship. He speaks of the external form rather than of the internal essence, of the body rather than of the soul of religion. To be religious, in the sense of our verse, is to be a diligent observer of the external forms of worship: 'If any man among you think that he is observant of religious service,' that he is a true worshipper of God.—**and bridleth not his own tongue**, does not abstain from wrath and contention: does not exercise a command over his words.—**but deceiveth his own heart**, imposeth upon himself, by relying upon the mere form of religion.—**this man's religion**, religious service or worship, **is vain**—of no value in the sight of God.

Ver. 27. **Pure religion and undefiled.** Pure and undefiled may almost be regarded as synonymous terms, the one expressing the idea positively, and the other negatively. Not, as some arbitrarily think, 'pure' referring to the inner, and 'undefiled' to the external life. There may be a reference here to the frequent washings and purifications which characterized the Jewish worship.—**before God and the Father**; in His view, who looketh not so much at the outward appearance as at the heart. The Father is added to express the relation of God to us, as one of paternal love.—**is this**—consists in this. James does not here give an enumeration of all the parts of religious service, but mentions only two chief points—active benevolence toward the afflicted, and careful avoidance of the impurities of the world; these, he observes, and not certain ceremonial observances, are the outward forms in which real worship manifests itself.—**to visit the fatherless and the widows.** There is a probable reference here to 'before God and the Father;' before Him who is the Father of the fatherless and the God of the widows.—**in their affliction.** No kind of religious service or worship paid to God can be of any value, if it violate the royal law of charity. The fatherless and the widows are mentioned as examples of the afflicted. But along with this active benevolence toward the afflicted there must be combined personal purity.—**and to keep himself unspotted.** Personal purity which, like the delicate pupil of the eye, shrinks from the very approach of everything which defileth, which garrisons the heart with holy affections to keep out those which are polluting, which maintains a conduct above suspicion, and which abstains from the very appearance of evil, is acceptable in the sight of our God and Father, and shall be rewarded with the manifestation of His glory: for, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'—**from the world.** By the 'world' is here meant not merely earthly things so far as they tempt to sin, or worldly lusts, but the world as the enemy of God, the rival of God in the human heart; all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John ii. 14). Christians, by being born again by the word of truth, are separated from the world—they are a peculiar people. But still, so long as they live in the world, they are exposed to its temptations and liable to be defiled by its pollutions. They must carefully avoid that friendship of the world which is enmity with God (Jas. iv. 4).

CHAPTER II. 1-13.

Respect of Persons.

1 MY brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 [a] *the Lord* of glory, [b] with respect of persons. For if there come unto your [c] assembly a man with a gold ring,[1] in goodly apparel,[2] and there come in also a poor man in vile
3 raiment;[3] and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him,[4] Sit thou here [d] in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my
4 footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are [5]

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 8. [b] Rom. ii. 11; Mat. xxii. 16. [c] Heb. x. 25; 1 Cor. xiv. 23. [d] Mat. xxiii. 6.

[1] with gold rings [2] gay clothing [3] clothing [4] *omit* unto him
[5] Was not this to doubt within yourselves, and to

5 become [e] judges of evil thoughts? [6] Hearken, my beloved
brethren, Hath not [f] God chosen the poor of this world rich
[g] in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to
6 them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not
rich men oppress you, and [h] draw you before the judgment-
7 seats? Do not they [i] blaspheme that worthy [7] name by the
8 which [k] ye are called? [8] If [9] ye fulfil the royal law [l] according
to the scripture, [m] Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye
9 do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and
10 are convinced of [10] the law [n] as transgressors. For whosoever
shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is
11 guilty of all. For he that said, [o] Do not commit adultery, said
also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if
12 thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak
ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by [p] the law of
13 liberty. For he shall have judgment [q] without mercy [11] that
hath showed no mercy; and [r] mercy rejoiceth against [12] judg-
ment.

e Lu. xvi. 8, xviii. 6.
f 1 Cor. i. 27.
g 1 Tim. i. 2.
h Acts vi. 12, viii. 3.
i Acts xxvi. 11.
k Deut. xxviii. 10; Amos ix. 12.
l Lev. xix. 18.
m Gal. v. 14; Rom. xiii. 10.
n 1 Jo. iii. 4.
o Ex. xx. 13, 14.
p Jas. i. 25.
q Mat. vi. 15.
r Mat. v. 7.

[6] evil-minded judges [7] goodly [8] which was named on you
[9] Yet if [10] convicted by
[11] For the judgment will be without mercy to him [12] glorieth over

CONTENTS. In this passage, St. James proceeds to caution his readers against showing respect of persons, especially in their religious assemblies; for by doing so they would violate their Christian principles, and become evil-minded judges. God has chosen His people from among the poor; whereas the persecutors of believers and the blasphemers of Christ are from among the rich. The law of God requires them to love their neighbour as themselves; but by exhibiting this respect of persons they violate this law. They must so speak and act as they who are to be judged by the law of the Gospel, remembering that if they show no mercy to the poor, no mercy will be shown to them by God.

Ver. 1. **My brethren.** The connection appears to be: As the true service of God consists in active benevolence, exercised especially toward the poor and afflicted, St. James takes occasion to reprove his readers for a practice which was in direct contradiction to this, namely, showing partiality to the rich, and despising the poor.—**have not**, or hold not, **the faith**—the profession of Christianity, or the belief in Jesus as the true Messiah. Do not hold it in such a manner, as that respect of persons should constitute a part of it.—**of our Lord Jesus Christ**: of Him who, although rich, yet for our sakes became poor, in whom there is neither rich nor poor, and with whom there is no respect of persons.—**the Lord of glory.** The words 'the Lord' are in italics, and not in the original; all that is in the Greek are the words 'of glory.' Accordingly, different meanings have been attached to this phrase. Some construe it with 'respect of persons,' and translate it 'according to your estimate or opinion;' thus Calvin: 'Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons, on account of esteem;' that is, placing a false and unchristian value on riches. Others attach it to Christ: 'the faith of our Lord Jesus, the Christ, or the Messiah, of glory.' Others consider it as governed by faith, but give different meanings: 'the glorious faith of our Lord Jesus Christ;' or 'faith in the glory or exaltation of Christ;' or 'the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ in the glory,' namely, in that glory which is reserved for the saints. Others suppose that glory is a personal appellation of Christ: 'our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glory,' equivalent to the Shechinah of the Jewish Church. This is certainly the simplest reading; but there is no proof from the New Testament that such an epithet was applied to our Lord. Our version, by supplying the words 'the Lord' from the former clause, is the least objectionable: 'the Lord of glory.' The clause is inserted to show the vanity of earthly riches, as contrasted with the glory of Christ.—**with respect of persons**: a caution against showing undue preference to any on account of external circumstances. The word in the Greek is in the plural, as St. James had several instances of such respect of persons in view. We must, however, beware of perverting this maxim. We must show due respect where respect is due: as St. Paul says, 'Render to all their due, honour to whom honour is due' (Rom. xiii. 7). There is a respect due to a man in office on account of his official character. Servants must honour their masters, and subjects their rulers; but we are not called to honour a man merely on account of his wealth. And in spiritual matters all are equal. In the house of God, the rich and the poor meet on the same footing of equality. The same exhortations are

addressed to both; and the vices of the rich must be rebuked with the same sharpness as the vices of the poor.

Ver. 2. **For if there come.** St. James does not here mention a mere hypothetical case, but what must frequently have occurred.—**unto your assembly.** The word employed in the Greek is 'synagogue.' Some understand it of the Jewish synagogue, from which believers had not yet separated themselves; but against this opinion is the pronoun 'your,' nor would Christians in a synagogue not their own be permitted to give any preference of place to those who entered. Others think that the reference is to the judicial assemblies which the Christians, in imitation of the Jews, held in their places of meeting, and that the caution is against showing partiality in the administration of justice; but this is an arbitrary opinion for which there is no reason. The reference is undoubtedly to the Christian places of assembly, for worship. To denote these places of assembly, the word 'synagogue' was employed, because it was more familiar to St. James and the Jewish Christians than the corresponding Greek term. We read in the Acts that there were numerous synagogues in Jerusalem (Acts vi. 9), and among them there would be the synagogue of the Christians; and the same would be the case in all the large cities where the Jews of the dispersion congregated.—**a man with a gold ring**: literally, gold-ringed, wearing many rings. Formerly persons of distinction wore only one signet ring; but at the time when this Epistle was written, as we learn from Roman writers, it was the custom for the wealthy to wear many rings. Such rings could only be worn by free citizens, and were consequently a symbol of rank or riches.—**in goodly apparel.** The gorgeous dresses of the Orientals may be here alluded to. In that age of luxury the rich prided themselves on the extravagance of their dress.—**and there come in also a poor man in vile** or shabby **raiment.** The description is in St. James' graphic style. Into their place for religious assembly two men entered, the one gorgeously arrayed with jewelled fingers and a great display of riches; the other a poor man in shabby apparel, soiled with his daily manual occupations.

Ver. 3. **And ye have respect**: literally, ye look upon, ye have regard **to him that weareth the gay clothing.** The two who came in are very differently treated; the rich man is conducted with all honour to a comfortable seat, whilst the poor man is left to shift for himself. In these verses there is in our English version a needless variation in the renderings of the same Greek word; the words apparel, raiment, and clothing are all in the original expressed by the same term.—**and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place**; a place of consequence and comfort: literally, 'Be well seated.' As in the Jewish synagogues, so in the Christian, there would be a diversity of seats. Thus we read of the scribes and Pharisees who 'loved the chief seats in the synagogues' (Matt. xxiii. 6).—**and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool.** The other man in vile raiment is told to stand where he is, or is allowed to sit where he can, provided he does not select a good seat. Observe the contrast between 'here' and 'there;' 'here,' the goodly seat—the place of honour; 'there,' the seat under the footstool—the place of dishonour. We are not informed whether those who came in were believers or unbelievers. Some suppose that both parties were Christian strangers, others that they were Gentiles or unbelieving Jews, and others that the poor were believers and the rich unbelievers. But it is best to leave it, as in the Epistle, undetermined; they are taken merely as samples of each class—the rich and the poor. It is well known that those who were not Christians might and did come into the Christian assemblies (1 Cor. xiv. 23).

Ver. 4. This verse has given rise to a great variety of interpretation, owing to the uncertainty of its correct translation. **Are ye not partial in yourselves?** This version is hardly correct. Some render the words: 'Did you not judge among yourselves,' by thus determining that the rich are to be preferred to the poor? Others: 'Did you not discriminate or make a distinction' among those who as Christians are equal? Others: 'Were ye not contentious among yourselves?' did ye not thus become litigants among yourselves? And others: 'Did ye not doubt among yourselves' —become wavering and unsettled in your faith? The verb in the original is the same which in the former chapter is translated to doubt or to waver (Jas. i. 6); and therefore, although it may also admit of the above significations, it is best to give a preference to that sense in which St. James has already used it. Hence, literally translated, 'Did you not doubt in yourselves?' Did you not, in showing this respect of persons, waver between God with whom there is no respect of persons and the world, and thus become double-minded? Did you not contradict your faith, according to which the external distinction between rich and poor is nothing? For to hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect to persons is a contradiction in terms. The Revised Version has, 'Are ye not divided in your own mind?'—**and are become judges of evil thoughts?** Here also there is an equal variety of opinion. Some consider 'the evil thoughts' as the objects of their judgments, and render the clause: 'Are you not judges of evil disputations'—of such disputations as a strife about precedence would give rise to. But it is best to take 'the evil thoughts' in a subjective sense, as residing in the judges themselves —evil-minded judges; showing themselves to be so by giving an undue preference to the rich. Just as a partial judge may be called a judge of partiality, or, in the same manner, as the unjust judge in the parable is in the Greek called the 'judge of injustice' (Luke xviii. 6; see also Luke xvi. 8). Compare i. 25, 'a forgetful hearer,' literally 'a hearer of forgetfulness.' The word here rendered 'thoughts' also denotes reasonings, disputations; and hence some render the clause 'judges who reason ill;' who, instead of calmly acting on principles of equity, are led astray by partiality to the rich.

Ver. 5. **Hearken, my beloved brethren.** With this verse St. James commences to show the sinfulness of such conduct; and, first, it is in contradiction to the conduct of God.—**Hath not God chosen the poor of this world**; that is, either those whom the world esteems poor—the poor in the opinion of the world; or those who are poor in relation to this world—the poor in worldly wealth.—**rich in faith.** Rich in faith is not in apposition to the poor of this world, but the object or intention of God's choosing them—that they

might be rich in faith. Faith is not the quality, but the sphere or element, in which they were rich. These riches consisted in the spiritual blessings which faith procured, and especially in the sonship of believers—in the heirship of the heavenly kingdom. 'The rich in faith,' observes Calvin, 'are not those who abound in the greatness of faith, but such as God has enriched with the various gifts of the Spirit which we receive by faith.'—**and heirs of the kingdom**, namely, not the spiritual kingdom of Christ on earth, but the heavenly kingdom.—**which he hath promised to them that love him**; the love of God being the essence of true piety. St. James did not require to prove the truth of this statement; the condition of the Jewish Christians of the dispersion, to whom he wrote, was proof sufficient that although there were a few rich among them, yet they were mostly chosen from among the poor. Compare with this the words of St. Paul: 'God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty' (1 Cor. i. 27). And the same statement holds good in the present day. The rich are under far greater temptations than the poor; they are led to trust in uncertain riches, and to seek their good things in this world, to fix their happiness here, and to forget 'the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him.' 'How hardly,' says our Saviour, 'shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God' (Mark x. 23).

Ver. 6. **But ye**, in contrast to God's estimate of the poor. God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, whereas ye, on the contrary, **have despised the poor**: not so much the poor generally, as the poor among Christians. Now follows a second consideration; that by showing respect to the rich, they give a preference to those who were the enemies both of themselves and of Christ.—**Do not rich men**: it is unnatural to suppose that Christian rich men are meant, but rich men as such, who in their worldliness and pride manifest a hatred to Christianity.—**oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seat?** The rich unbelieving Jews were the bitterest enemies to their believing countrymen: they fined and imprisoned them, as apostates from Judaism. Thus we read that Saul made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison (Acts viii. 3). Those who suppose that by the rich here mentioned Christians are intended, think that the reference is not to persecution, but to litigation, similar to the abuses which occurred in the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. vi. 6).

Ver. 7. **Do not they blaspheme.** The pronoun is emphatic: 'Is it not they who blaspheme.' The allusion may be to the attempts of the unbelieving Jews to compel believers to blaspheme the name of Christ. Thus it is said of Saul, that he punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme (Acts xxvi. 11). But it is better to refer it to the blasphemous utterances of the Jews themselves. Thus Justin Martyr tells us, that the Jews were accustomed to blaspheme Christ in their synagogues. Those who suppose that the rich men here mentioned are Christians, think that it refers to the disgrace brought upon Christianity by their ungodly practices: that they blasphemed Christ in their lives. But such a meaning is less natural and appropriate. —**that worthy**, goodly, or noble **name**—not the name of 'God,' or that of 'brethren,' but the name of 'Christ.' It does not, however, follow from this that believers were at this early period called Christians. It is a goodly name, for Christ is the Lord of glory, the Founder of Christianity, the Messiah promised to their fathers.—**by the which you are called?** or rather, 'which was invoked upon you,' namely at your baptism, when baptized into the name of Christ. The allusion is to the name of God being put upon the children of Israel to distinguish them as His property. 'They shall put my name upon the children of Israel' (Num. vi. 27). So the name of Christ was put upon believers to signify that they belonged to Him.

Ver. 8. **If.** The connection has been variously understood. Some suppose that St. James is anticipating an objection of his readers, that by showing respect of persons to the rich, they were obeying the royal law, in loving their neighbour as themselves; others think that he is guarding his own argument from misinterpretation.—**ye fulfil the royal law**; the law which is the king of all laws, which includes in itself all other commandments. Others understand the expression, 'the law which like the royal road is plain, straight and level;' others, 'the law which proceeds from the great King,' whether God or Christ; and others, 'the law which applies to kings as well as to other men.' But all these meanings are objectionable, because they do not discriminate this special precept. It is to be observed that love to our neighbour is not so much a single command as the principle of all true obedience; it is the chief of all laws; all other laws are its ministering servants. 'All the law,' says St. Paul, 'is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Gal. v. 14). —**according to the scripture**; here not according to the Gospel—the words of Jesus; but according to the law of Moses (Lev. xix. 18).—**Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.** For then it would follow that if you did so, you would not have this respect of persons.

Ver. 9. **But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin**, ye violate this royal law, **and are convinced of**, convicted by, **the law.** By the law here is not meant a single commandment, as the law against partiality or respect of persons, but the moral law, and which, as regards our duties to others, is summed up in this command to love our neighbour as ourselves.—**as transgressors**, because such a respect of persons is contrary and opposed to a disinterested and universal love to others.

Ver. 10. **For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point**—one particular, one commandment—**he is guilty of all**: that is, although respect of persons may appear to be the violation only of a single precept, yet it is a transgression of the whole law. The truth of this statement of St. James is founded on the unity both of the Lawgiver and of the law. The same God who gave one commandment, gave all: the law is but the expression of His will: and, therefore, whosoever breaks one commandment opposes himself to the will of God. So also love is the essence of the law; and whosoever sins transgresses this royal law of love. 'God,' says Calvin, 'will not be honoured with exceptions, nor will He allow us to cut off from His law what is less pleasing to us. St. James denies that our neighbours are loved by us, when only a portion

of them is, through ambition, chosen and the rest neglected.' The Jews have a similar sentiment: 'If a man obeys all the precepts of Moses, but leaves out one, he is guilty of all and of each.' This declaration of St. James was especially appropriate to the Jewish Christians, who were in danger of being led away by the errors of the Pharisees. The Jewish doctors affirmed that if men kept any one precept of the law, it was sufficient; and accordingly some selected the law of the Sabbath, others the law of sacrifice, and others the law of tithes; whilst the law of love was neglected.

Ver. 11. **For:** the reason of the above assertion, arising from the unity of the Divine Author of the law.—**He**, namely God, **that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill** (Ex. xx. 13, 14). Various reasons have been assigned for the selection of these two precepts; but the most obvious is that these are the two first commandments of the second table of the law, containing our duties to our neighbour; the fifth being generally classed by Jewish writers as belonging to the first table.[1] —**Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.** There is a Divine unity in the law, as well as in the Lawgiver. We must obey all the laws of God, without exception or limitation; if we offend in one particular, the law is broken and we become transgressors. A man who is a liar, although he may observe all the other precepts of the moral law, is evidently living in open violation of the law of God.

Ver. 12. **So speak ye and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.** The law of liberty is not here the moral law, nor the love of our neighbour as a single commandment, but the same as that mentioned in the former chapter: 'Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty' (Jas. i. 25). See explanation of that passage. Believers are under the law of liberty, because they are freed from the condemning sentence of the moral law, and are delivered from the enslaving power of sin, a disposition having been implanted within them which renders them willing to obey the Divine commands. The spirit of bondage is superseded by the spirit of adoption. And by this law of liberty believers shall be judged; their good works will be rewarded, and their voluntary obedience to the moral law which springs from faith in Christ will be graciously accepted. They are no longer under the moral law, as a rule of rewards and punishments, but under grace—this law of liberty.

Ver. 13. **For**, the reason assigned for so speaking and acting, **he shall have judgment without mercy**, literally, the judgment will be without mercy to him, **who hath showed no mercy.** We must show mercy to our fellow-men, if we expect mercy from God. Compare the words of our Lord: 'If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (Matt. vi. 15). On the other hand: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy' (Matt. v. 7). The chief aim of the Gospel is to make men like God; to form the Divine image in the human soul; that they should be merciful, even as their Father in heaven is merciful.—**and mercy rejoiceth against**, boasteth over, **judgment.** Mercy and judgment are here personified; judgment threatens to condemn the sinner, but mercy interposes and overcomes judgment. The saying is general, and not to be limited either to God or to man; mercy prevails against judgment. 'Mercy,' says St. Chrysostom, 'is dear to God, and intercedes for the sinner, and breaks his chains, and dissipates the darkness, and quenches the fire of hell, and destroys the worm, and rescues from the gnashing of teeth. To her the gates of heaven are opened. She is the queen of virtues, and makes men like to God; for it is written, Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful. She has silver wings like the dove, and feathers of gold, and soars aloft, and is clothed with the Divine glory, and stands by the throne of God; when we are in danger of being condemned, she rises up and pleads for us, and covers us with her defence, and enfolds us with her wings. God loves mercy more than sacrifice.' Compare with this Shakespeare's celebrated lines on the quality of mercy.

[1] The seventh commandment, 'Do not commit adultery,' is also, as here, put before the sixth, 'Do not kill,' in Mark x. 19, Luke xviii 20, Rom. xiii. 9; whereas in Matt. xix. 18 the order in the Decalogue is retained.

CHAPTER II. 14-26.

Relation of Faith and Works.

14 WHAT *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can [1] faith save him?
15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
16 and one of you say unto them, [a] Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things
17 which are needful to the body, what *doth it* profit? Even so
18 faith, if it hath not works, is [b] dead, being alone.[2] Yea, [c] a man may say,[3] Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my

[a] Mk. v. 34; Lu. vii. 50; 1 Jo. iii. 17, 18.
[b] Jude 12.
[c] 1 Cor. xv. 35

[1] *insert* this [2] in itself [3] one will say

19 works. Thou believest that [d] there is one God; thou doest [d] Mk. xii. 29, 32.
20 well: the devils also believe, and tremble.[4] But wilt thou
21 know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? [e] Was [e] Rom. iv. 1–3.
not Abraham our father justified by works, [f] when he had [f] Gen. xxii. 2, 12; Heb. xi. 17, 18.
22 offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how[5] faith
wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?
23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, [g] Abraham believed [g] Gen. xv. 5, 6; Rom. iv. 3; Gal. iii. 6.
God, and it was imputed[6] unto him for righteousness: and he
24 was called [h] the Friend of God. Ye see then how[7] that by [h] 2 Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8.
25 works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also,
was not [i] Rahab the harlot justified by works, [k] when she had[8] [i] Heb. xi. 31. [k] Josh. ii. 1–24.
received the messengers, and had[8] sent *them* out another way?
26 For as [l] the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without [l] Gen. vi. 17.
works is dead also.

[4] shudder [5] Thou seest that [6] reckoned
[7] *omit* then how [8] *omit* had

CONTENTS. In this passage James continues to enforce practical religion. He tells his readers that faith destitute of works is of no avail to the saving of the soul, and is as useless as a charity which expends itself in kind words, but is destitute of beneficent actions. As the charity is dead, so also is the faith. Faith can only be manifested by works. A mere theoretical belief in God is of no advantage, and differs little from the belief of evil spirits. Such a faith, unproductive of works, cannot justify. Abraham was justified by an active faith when he offered up Isaac; by works did his faith receive its full realization; thus proving that a man is justified by an active and not by an unproductive faith. So also Rahab was similarly justified when she harboured the spies. Faith destitute of works resembles a body from which the living spirit has departed.

Ver. 14. The connection appears to be as follows:—James has been showing that true religious worship does not consist in the performance of certain ceremonies, but in active beneficence extended toward the poor and afflicted, and that opposed to this is a respect of persons showing partiality to the rich. He now proceeds further to maintain the more general proposition that a profession of religion, apart from religious practice, is of no value. James carefully separates appearance and reality from each other—the shadow from the substance. As formerly he showed that the hearing of the word without the doing was worthless, and that religious worship was of no avail without active beneficence; so now he asserts that a mere theoretical assent to the truths of the Gospel was also unprofitable and vain.—**What shall it profit?**—literally, 'What is the use?' Faith without works will not profit at the judgment; it will not be conducive to the saving of the soul.—**my brethren, though a man say.** Some critics lay stress on the word 'say,' as if the assertion of a faith without works was a mere affirmation or profession, and not a reality. But James admits the existence of a speculative faith; the man is supposed to have faith of a certain kind, though not saving faith.—**he hath faith.** It is of importance for the understanding of this passage to ascertain what is here meant by faith. James evidently takes the word in its general acceptation; with him it denotes any assent to religious truth, whether it be operative or inoperative. And what he asserts is that if the faith be inoperative, if it be a lifeless principle, unproductive of good works, a mere intellectual assent to Divine truth without its exerting any influence over our heart and conduct, it cannot save us. James undoubtedly considers faith to be a necessary prerequisite to salvation, but only that faith which is productive and accompanied with works.—**and have not works.** By works, as is evident from the context, James means those works which are the fruits and effects of faith—evangelical works which arise from faith; hence, then, not mere ceremonial works, nor even moral or legal works done previous to and apart from faith.—**can faith save him?** The article in the Greek must here receive its full force—literally, 'Can the faith save him?' that is, the particular faith which such a man possesses—'this faith.' Faith certainly does save; nothing can be more evidently the doctrine of Scripture than that our salvation is attached to faith; but not the faith to which James here alludes: Can this faith save him?—this dead, barren faith; this mere speculative belief in the doctrines of the Gospel.

Ver. 15. To prove the uselessness of a barren faith, the apostle illustrates the subject by showing the uselessness of a barren charity, which every one will at once admit; and this illustration is the more appropriate, as love is the indispensable attendant on a living faith—the instrument by which it works (Gal. v. 6).—**If a brother or sister**—a Christian brother or sister—a fellow-believer—bringing forward more strongly our duty to assist them, and our culpability if we refuse such assistance.—**be naked and destitute of daily food**—be reduced to a state of extreme destitution. By daily food is meant the food necessary for each day.

Ver. 16. **And one of you say to them, Depart**

in peace, be ye warmed and filled: warmed in reference to their being naked, and filled in reference to their being destitute of daily food. Expressions of kind wishes toward the destitute; mere words, but no actions. The words are such as, if sincere, would have been followed by corresponding actions. 'Depart in peace,' are the words which our Saviour employed when He dismissed those whom He had cured (Luke vii. 50).—**notwithstanding ye gave them not those things which are needful to the body,** namely, food and raiment.—**what doth it profit?** What good do your kind words do either to them or to yourselves? Undoubtedly charity, if it have not works, is dead.

Ver. 17. Now follows the application of this illustration. As this love, which merely expends itself in kind words and wishes, is of no value; so neither is the faith of him who professes to believe the Gospel, yet walks not up to his profession. **Even so**; as charity without works is dead, so **faith, if it hath not works,** if it be merely a theoretical assent to the truths of revelation, **is dead.** From this it is evident that by works is not meant merely something which is added to faith, but something which proceeds from it; as life is seen by its actions, so is faith by its works. The works then are those of a living faith, those to which faith gives birth. 'If,' observes Neander, 'James calls the faith which is without works a dead faith, it could not surely be his view that works, which are but the outward manifestation, made faith to be living; but he must have presupposed that true faith has the principle of life within itself, from which works must proceed, and which manifests itself in works.'—**being alone.** The words in the Greek are not tautological, as they appear in our version, but emphatic. More correctly rendered they are 'by itself'—denoting that a simple assent is useless, or rather 'in itself,' *i.e.* is wholly and completely dead—has no living root which might spring up—'twice dead, plucked up by the roots,' as Jude expresses it (Jude 12). As has been observed, 'A tree in winter may not have signs of life, but is not dead in itself; it will put forth shoots and leaves in spring. But faith has no winter; if it has not works, it has no life in it, and ought not to be called faith, for dead faith is no faith' (Wordsworth). It is, however, to be remembered that James does not deny the existence of a theoretical faith; he distinguishes between faith and faith, between theoretical and practical faith; and to the former, the theoretical faith, he denies that justification can be ascribed.

Ver. 18. **Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith and I have works.** There is a considerable diversity of opinion in the interpretation of these words. They appear to be the language of an objector, being the usual form by which an objection is introduced (Rom. ix. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 35); but when examined, they express the sentiments of James, and not those of an opponent; if an objection, we would have expected the opposite: 'Thou hast works and I have faith.' Some, considering the words as those of an objector, give the following interpretation: 'One, defending thee, may say: Thou, who hast not works, hast faith, and I, who declare that faith without works is dead, have works; there is no reason to lay more stress upon the one than upon the other.' But such a meaning is complicated and awkward; it reverses the language of the apostle. Others suppose that the objector is a Pharisaical Jew who, opposing James, maintains justification to be entirely by works without faith; but such a meaning is not borne out by the context. It is best to suppose that the words are not those of an objector, but of a person who agrees with the apostle, and who is here introduced to impart liveliness to the discussion. Nay, one may interpose, Thou hast faith and I have works. Others connect the words with ver. 14, and consider the intervening words as parenthetic, but we do not see how this removes the difficulty. —**shew me thy faith without thy works,** prove to me the reality of your faith. A faith without works is incapable of being proved. To show faith without works is simply an impossibility. If it exist at all in such a state, it exists in a passive or latent form in a man's mind, and cannot be shown to others. Faith is not entirely denied to the man, but living faith is; if faith does not prove itself by works it is dead, and of no value as regards salvation.—**and I will show thee my faith by my works.** This is the key to the meaning of James. Justification is denied to a dead faith, and affirmed only of a living faith—a faith which manifests itself in works. This is the test by which we are to try the reality of our faith; and this is the test by which we shall be judged at the final judgment. We shall not then be examined as to the pureness of our creed or the extent of our knowledge, but whether we have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and ministered to the afflicted; whether we have practised that religious worship which consists in visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and in preserving ourselves unspotted from the world.

Ver. 19. **Thou believest that there is one God.** Here the existence of a theoretical faith is admitted: Thou assentest to the statement that there is one God, or, as it is otherwise read, 'that God is one.' This particular article of faith is chosen from a Jewish point of view, because the Jews put a high value on it, as that which distinguished them from the rest of the world. And it is still the boast of the Jews that their national vocation is to be witnesses to the unity of the Godhead. Hence then: Thou hast more knowledge and a more correct faith than the Gentiles, who have gods many and lords many.—**thou doest well:** so far good. There is a certain touch of irony in the language; but the irony does not lie in the words, 'Thou doest well,' but in the whole statement—that a theoretical faith in the unity of God, though in itself good, yet does not essentially differ from the belief of devils.—**the devils.** By the devils here are not meant the devils in the possessed who trembled before Christ (Matt. viii. 29); nor the heathen divinities considered as demons (1 Cor. x. 20), but evil spirits generally. —**also believe**—assent to this doctrine—**and tremble:** the word in the Greek is stronger, 'and shudder.' The force of this addition may be: 'The faith of the nominal Christian is no better than the faith which devils possess; nay, it is not even so good, for the devils not only believe, but they also tremble;' or it may be: 'The devils' belief in God, because unproductive of works and obedience, not only cannot save them, but is the cause of their trembling before the Divine tribunal' (Brückner).

Ver. 20. **But wilt thou know,** or rather, 'Art

thou willing to know,' to recognise this truth? implying that such knowledge was not palatable to him.—**O vain man**; that is, O empty man, puffed up with pride, trusting to thy outward privileges, but without seriousness and spiritual life.—**that faith without works is dead.** Some manuscripts read 'is idle,' that is, inoperative or useless; a reading which makes no alteration in the sense. Faith without works is properly not faith at all, but reprobate faithlessness.

Ver. 21. James now adduces two examples—those of Abraham and Rahab—to prove the truth of his assertion that faith can only save if it is productive of good works. And, first, the example of Abraham.—**Was not Abraham.** The same example is adduced by Paul (Rom. iv. 1–5); but there is no reason to suppose that the one writer borrowed from the other. The example of Abraham would readily occur to every Jew, on account of the importance of that patriarch in their national history.—**our father**: the same appellation is given by Paul; but here it is given because both James and his readers, the Jewish Christians, were descended from Abraham.—**was justified.** Some suppose that by 'justified' is meant proved to be justified, and that the allusion is to the manifestation of our justification before men, which can only be by works. Thus Calvin remarks: 'Paul means by the word "justified" the gratuitous imputation of righteousness before the tribunal of God; and James, the manifestation of righteousness by the conduct, and that before men. In this sense we fully allow that a man is justified by works, as when one says that a man is enriched by the purchase of a large and valuable estate, because his riches, before hid, shut up in a chest, were thus made known.' But this has too much the appearance of a subterfuge to avoid a difficulty; it puts a forced interpretation upon the text. We take the word in its ordinary meaning, 'declared righteous in the sight of God,' equivalent to '*saved*' in a previous verse: 'Can faith save him?'—**by works.** Paul also appeals to the case of Abraham, but with a desire to prove that he was justified by faith without works. These writers view the matter in different lights. Paul asserts that Abraham was justified by the unseen principle of faith; he simply believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. James affirms that the faith by which Abraham was justified was a faith which manifested itself by works, and was seen in a remarkable manner by the great act of his obedience—the sacrifice of Isaac; his faith obtained its perfection by works. *See excursus at the end of this exposition.* The plural *works*, whereas only one work is mentioned, is explained from the fact that the class is named to which the offering up of Isaac belongs.—**when he had offered Isaac his son on the altar.** This great act of obedience (Gen. xxii. 2) was certainly a work of faith, arising from Abraham's practical belief in God. 'By faith,' writes the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises, offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it is said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure' (Heb. xi. 17–19). It was therefore a most notable proof that Abraham had a living faith, and was therefore in a justified state.

Ver. 22. **Seest thou how**, or, more correctly, 'thou seest that,' **faith wrought, co-operated, with his works.** This cannot mean that works co-operated with his faith in the matter of his justification before God, as if God did not know that he had living faith until it showed itself by works. But the evident meaning is that the offering of Isaac proved that the faith of Abraham was not a dead, but a living and active faith, and thus was a verification of Abraham's justification. It was faith that enabled him to perform this work.—**and by works was faith made perfect, fully** realized, completed; not proved or verified, but perfected. Faith is only perfected when it is embodied or realized in good works. As love is perfected by the practice of works of benevolence, so faith is perfected by the practice of those works which are appropriate to it. By works faith attains its legitimate development or completion. 'Faith creates works; works perfect faith' (Stier).

Ver. 23. **And the scripture was fulfilled.** The same expression which is employed with reference to prophetical declarations; hence 'the Scripture received its accomplishment.' This great act of obedience on the part of Abraham was a proof of the fulfilment of the scriptural declaration made concerning him.—**which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness**; the scriptural statement. This remarkable declaration is also twice quoted by Paul (Rom. iv. 3; Gal. iii. 6). The words are by both apostles quoted from the Septuagint. In the Hebrew the verb *imputed* is in the active, and not in the passive voice: 'And he believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness' (Gen. xv. 6). This occurred long before Abraham offered up Isaac, indeed before the birth of Isaac. Abraham was at that early period in a justified state before God; the declaration was made concerning him; and by his offering of Isaac the scriptural declaration received its fulfilment and realization. It is therefore evident that this act of obedience was not the cause of Abraham's justification; but, because it proved that Abraham was possessed of a living faith, it fulfilled the words of Scripture.—**and he was called the Friend of God**; not adduced as a statement of Scripture which received its fulfilment, but an additional assertion of the favour in which Abraham stood with God. It is not directly stated that Abraham, in consequence of his offering up Isaac, received this honourable appellation, but the blessing which that name denotes is evidently presupposed: Abraham was the Beloved of God. The name is twice ascribed to Abraham in the Old Testament, according to our English version. Jehoshaphat, in his prayer, says: 'Thou gavest this land to the seed of Abraham thy friend' (2 Chron. xx. 7). And in the prophecies of Isaiah we read: 'Thou Israel art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend' (Isa. xli. 8). The term, however, is found neither in the Hebrew nor in the Septuagint, but is employed by Philo. And this is still the favourite description of Abraham, both by the Jews and by the Mahometans. By the Mahometans his proper name is often supplanted by the appellation El-Khalil-Allah, 'the Friend of God.'

Ver. 24. **Ye see then**, from this example of Abraham, **how that by works a man is justified.** The emphasis is upon works: stress is put upon

the fact that faith must be productive of works.—**and not by faith only.** These words do not admit of the translation, 'and not only by faith:' as if there were two kinds of justification, the one by faith and the other by works; or as if faith did part, and works were required to do the rest. The meaning is, 'not by faith simply,'—by a faith without works, which cannot justify either in whole or in part. It must be carefully observed that James does not deny that a man is justified by faith; on the contrary, he presupposes this truth, as without faith there can be no works, in the sense in which he employs the term works; he only asserts that justifying faith must not be alone, but must be productive of works.

Ver. 25. The second example which James adduces is that of Rahab. **Likewise also was not Rahab.** The same example, and the same incident in Rahab's history, is also adduced by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as an illustrious instance of faith. The example is not so obvious as that of Abraham; and we can assign no sufficient reason why it was selected by both writers.—**the harlot:** to be taken in its literal sense, and not to be considered as equivalent to innkeeper.—**justified,** namely before God.—**by works when she received the messengers, and sent them out another way.** This was certainly a work springing from her faith; it arose from her firm belief in the God of Israel. Indeed, Rahab herself gives this as the reason of her conduct: 'I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and in the earth beneath' (Josh. ii. 9, 11). Her receiving the messengers, and sending them out another way, was therefore a proof that her faith was real and living. 'By faith,' says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace' (Heb. xi. 31). Her deliverance from death is to be ascribed to her faith, but it was to her faith as active. Thus did she manifest the reality of her faith. Her faith co-operated with her works, and by works was her faith made perfect—received its full realization; and in this sense she is said to be justified by works.

Ver. 26. **For as the body without the spirit is dead.** The 'spirit' here may either be the intelligent spirit—the soul of man; or the breath of life—the living principle; as in the expression, 'all flesh wherein is the breath of life' (Gen. vi. 17).—**so faith without works is dead also.** Here faith without works answers to the body without the spirit. At first sight it would seem that the comparison, in order to be correct, would require to be inverted; inasmuch as faith is a spiritual principle, whereas works are its external manifestations; so that we would require to read: 'so works without faith are dead also.' But what James insists on here is not the deadness of works without faith, but the converse, the deadness of faith without works. According to him, a faith without works is like a body from which the living principle has departed; works are the evidences of life, and if these be absent, the faith is dead. A mere system of doctrine, however correct, is a mere dead body, unless it be animated by a living working spirit. We must not, however, press the metaphor too far. Strictly speaking, the works do not correspond to the spirit, but are only the outward manifestations of an internal living principle—the proof that there is life. An unproductive faith is a body without the spirit; a productive faith is the living body.

EXCURSUS: JAMES AND PAUL.

The relation of Paul and James to each other in regard to justification is a matter of such importance that it requires for its discussion a separate consideration. It is impossible in our limited space to give a full statement of the subject; all that we aim at is to point out the probable solution of the difficulties connected with it. It is undeniable that there is at least an apparent opposition between these sacred writers in their view of justification. We have merely to state their views in their own language to perceive the difference. Paul, as the conclusion of his argument, affirms: 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight' (Rom. iii. 20); and, in the Epistle to the Galatians, he makes the same assertion: 'By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified' (Gal. ii. 16). Whereas James appears to assert the very opposite: 'Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only' (Jas. ii. 26). And this apparent opposition is very obvious in their different statements concerning Abraham's justification, which both employ to illustrate or confirm their respective views. Paul says: 'If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God' (Rom. iv. 2). James asks: 'Was not Abraham our father justified by works?' (Jas. ii. 21). Thus, then, it would appear from the simple reading of these statements, that Paul ascribes our justification to faith without the works of the law; whereas James ascribes it, if not to works, at least to works combined with faith.

Accordingly, various modes of reconciliation have been adopted. These may be arranged into three classes, according to the meanings attached to the three principal terms—works, justification, and faith. One class of writers suppose that the sacred authors employ the term *works* in different senses. Some think that Paul speaks of works done in obedience to the ceremonial law, and James of works done in obedience to the moral law. Others think that Paul speaks of the works of the unregenerate, James of the works of the true believer. And undoubtedly there is a certain difference in their use of this term. The works of which Paul speaks, are legal works done without faith; the works of which James speaks, are evangelical works which arise from faith. But this is not the true solution of the difficulty, as even evangelical works are excluded from Paul's idea of justification. A second class of writers suppose that the term *justification* is differently employed by them. Some suppose that Paul considers justification from God's point of view, which is by faith; and that James speaks of justification from man's point of view, which is by works. But such a distinction in the meaning of the term 'justification' is not apparent: it would rather seem that both Paul and James employ the term in the same sense, as a declaration of righteousness on the part of God.[1] A

[1] Huther supposes that Paul has in view the justification that puts believers in a gracious relation to God in this

third class of writers suppose that there is a difference in the use of the term *faith*. Paul, it has been maintained, speaks of faith as an active practical principle—he recognises no other kind of faith; whereas James employs the term in a much more general sense, and includes in it theoretical as well as practical faith. It is in this direction that we consider the true solution of the question lies.

In any solution we must not forget the peculiar characteristics of Paul and James, the one as the apostle of the uncircumcision, and the other as the apostle of the circumcision. They stood in different relations to the Mosaic law. Paul regarded it as abolished, and he himself freed from its requirements, whereas James adhered to it to the last; and therefore we may expect expressions and statements used by the one in reference to justification which would not be employed by the other, even where no real discrepancy exists. Paul is eminently doctrinal, and therefore faith occupies a prominent place in his theology. James is eminently practical, and therefore works occupy a prominent place in his teaching. Both agree in ascribing our justification to faith, and both assert that the faith must be living; but they contemplate the matter under different points of view. James would hardly assert with Paul that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law, because he regarded faith as only efficacious when it is productive of works; and Paul would hardly assert with James that by works a man is justified and not by faith only, because he admitted of no other kind of faith than one that was living and active. Although, then, we believe that there is no real discrepancy in the opinions of these apostles, yet there is a remarkable difference in their terminology, arising from their individual peculiarities.

Paul and James view justification from different standpoints, according to the different nature of the errors which they opposed. Paul is arguing against those who supposed that they would be justified by their good works. His opponents are the self-righteous Pharisees, who trusted to their own righteousness, and boasted of their obedience to the law. He tells them that their own obedience was imperfect, that the law of God, far from justifying, condemns them, and that the only method of salvation was to exercise faith in Christ. But the faith, to which Paul attaches salvation, is presupposed to be a true and living faith, not the mere assent of the understanding to the proposition that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, but an application of this to our souls' necessities. James, on the other hand, is arguing against those who supposed that an orthodox faith could save, though unaccompanied with a holy life. Such an error was very common among the Jews. They placed their confidence in their external privileges, in their belief in the unity of the Godhead in contrast to the polytheism of the Gentiles; and this spirit was carried by the converted Jews into the Christian Church. James tells them that such a faith, which was merely theoretical and unproductive of good works, was useless; as useless as a barren charity which expended itself in kind wishes. Saving faith must be active; it must be productive of good works; if these be absent, the faith is dead, and will never save the soul. Thus, then, Paul opposes Pharisaical legalism—those who trusted to their own works for salvation. James opposes Pharisaical antinomianism—those who trusted to their religious knowledge and speculative faith. Paul teaches us how a guilty sinner may be justified before God; James reminds us that no man living in sin can be justified, whatever his profession may be. Paul answers the question of the awakened sinner, 'What must I do to be saved?' James exhorts professed believers to walk worthy of their calling. Paul discloses to the Pharisaical legalist the worthlessness of his works; James discloses to the Pharisaical antinomian the worthlessness of his faith.

But not only do the apostles contemplate the doctrine of justification under different points of view; they also employ the term faith in different senses. The faith to which Paul assigns justification is a real, active, and living belief in Jesus Christ; it is the assent of the will to the doctrines of revelation; it is a faith which worketh by love; he knows no other kind of faith. The faith of the Gospel requires action—something to be done; and it is the action which proves the reality and constitutes the value of the faith. Faith, if real, must work; if there are no works, it is a proof that the faith is unreal and a mere pretence. James, again, places his chief stress on the activity of living faith. He uses the term faith in a much more general sense than Paul, as including theoretical as well as practical belief. Faith, he asserts, can only justify when it is operative; if inoperative, if it is a mere speculative belief, it cannot justify; it is a dead faith, a mere body without the living spirit. Not by a mere general faith is a man justified, but by a faith productive of good works.

Paul and James then speak of different faiths, so that, although the one asserts that we are justified by faith without the works of the law, and the other that by works a man is justified and not by faith only, there is no contradiction between them, as they employ the term faith in different senses. Paul asserts that a living faith in Christ is the only cause of justification; James affirms that the faith which justifies must be living, and productive of good works. Paul descends from saving faith to good works as its necessary effects; James ascends from good works to saving faith as their cause and origin. Paul dwells on faith as the efficient cause; James insists on works as the indispensable effects. Paul assigns our justification to a faith which worketh by love; James denies that it can be assigned to a faith which is destitute of works. Paul speaks of a living faith by which the justified man lives; James of a dead faith, even as the body without the spirit is dead. The faith whereof Paul treats is that of the true believer; the faith which James reprobates is that of the nominal professor. If, then, these apostles use the term faith in different senses, there is no contradiction in their statements, even although there is a contradiction in the words by which these statements are expressed.

The full doctrine of Scripture on justification is that a man is justified not on account of his own righteousness, but on account of the merits of

world, and James the justification that places believers at the last judgment in the full enjoyment of God; an opinion which appears to be adopted by Dean Scott in his commentary. But the example of Abraham's justification, which was certainly in this life, is a refutation of this view.

Christ received by faith; but that this faith must be active, a faith which works by love, and leads a man to act according as he believes. The first part of this doctrine, that a man is justified by faith and not by his own righteousness, is chiefly dwelt upon by Paul; the second part, that the faith which justifies must be active, is chiefly dwelt upon by James. Paul addresses himself chiefly to those who are unbelievers, and who are trusting for salvation to their own works, and he urges them to faith in Christ. James addresses himself chiefly to professing Christians who neglect to walk up to their profession, and he urges them to prove their faith by their works, because a mere speculative faith in Christ will profit them nothing.

CHAPTER III. 1–18.

Government of the Tongue.

1 MY brethren, [a] be not many masters,[1] knowing that we
2 shall receive the[2] greater condemnation. [b] For in
many things we offend all. If any man [c] offend not in word,
the same *is* a perfect man, *and* [d] able also to bridle the whole
3 body. Behold,[3] we put bits in the horses' mouths that they
4 may obey us, and we[4] turn about their whole body. Behold
also the ships, which, though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of
fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm
5 whithersoever the governor listeth.[5] Even so the tongue is a
little member, and boasteth great things. [e] Behold how great
6 a matter[6] a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, [f] a[7]
world of iniquity: so[8] is the tongue[9] among our members, that
it[10] defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of
7 nature;[11] and [g] it is set on fire of hell. For every kind[12] of
beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is
8 tamed,[13] and hath been tamed[13] of mankind.[14] But the tongue
can no man tame;[15] *it is* an unruly[16] evil, [h] full of deadly
9 poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father;[17] and
therewith curse we men, which are made after [i] the similitude
10 of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and
11 cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth
a fountain send forth at the same place[18] sweet *water* and
12 bitter? [k] Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries?
either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water
and fresh.[19]

13 Who *is* [l] a wise man and endued with knowledge among
you? [m] let him show out of a good conversation[20] his works
14 with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and

[a] Mat. xxiii. 7; Rom. ii. 19; 1 Tim. i. 7.
[b] Eccl. vii. 20.
[c] Sir. xix. 6, 16; Ps. cvi. 33.
[d] Mat. xii. 34.
[e] Sir. xxviii. 14, 18.
[f] 1 Tim. vi. 10.
[g] Ps. lii. 3, 4, cxx. 3, 4.
[h] Ps. cxl. 3; Rom. iii. 13.
[i] Gen. i. 26, ix. 6; Col. iii. 10.
[k] Mat. vii. 16, xii. 35.
[l] Deut. i. 13.
[m] Ps. xxxiv. 12, 13.

[1] teachers
[2] *omit* the
[3] *Best MSS. read*, But if
[4] *omit* and, *and read* we also
[5] the inclination of the steersman willeth
[6] forest
[7] that
[8] *Best MSS. omit* so
[9] the tongue is
[10] that which
[11] the circle of life
[12] nature
[13] subdued
[14] human nature
[15] subdue
[16] *Best MSS. read*, restless
[17] *Best MSS. read*, the Lord and Father
[18] fissure
[19] *Best MSS. read*, neither can salt water bring forth sweet
[20] conduct

strife[21] in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.
15 This wisdom descendeth not[22] from above, but *is* earthly,
16 [a]sensual,[23] devilish. For where envying and strife[21] *is*, there
17 *is* confusion, and every evil work. But [b]the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and*[24] easy to be entreated,[25] full of mercy and good fruits, [c]without partiality,[26]
18 and without hypocrisy. And [d]the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of[27] them [e]that make peace.

[a] Jude 19; 1 Cor. ii. 14, xv. 44.
[b] Prov. ii. 6.
[c] Jas. ii. 4.
[d] Heb. xii. 11.
[e] Mat. v. 9.

[21] party strife
[22] is not one descending
[23] natural
[24] *omit* and
[25] persuaded
[26] doubting
[27] by

CONTENTS. In this chapter, St. James cautions his readers not to be too forward in assuming the office of teachers, but to exercise a wise restraint upon their zeal, knowing that such an office would confer on them a heavy responsibility. This caution leads him to advert to the importance of the government of the tongue. He who can command his tongue, commands himself. This observation he explains by two obvious illustrations, that of the bit which curbs the horse, and that of the helm which guides the ship. The tongue, he observes, though a little member, is a powerful instrument for good or evil. Its abuse gives rise to the greatest mischiefs, and influences for evil the whole circle of human life. It is more untameable than the wildest animals. By it we are guilty of the greatest inconsistency—blessing God, and cursing His image in man; an inconsistency which never occurs in nature, as no fountain sends forth both salt and fresh water, and no tree produces different kinds of fruit. St. James therefore urges his readers to a candid and benevolent spirit, and to exhibit wisdom and meekness in their conduct. He then distinguishes between earthly and heavenly wisdom; the former is the cause of envy and contention, of confusion and all kinds of wickedness; the latter leads to righteousness and peace.

Ver. 1. **My brethren, be not many masters.** Either 'be not many of you masters;' or rather, 'be not a multitude of masters'—each one striving to be a master. 'Masters' here used not in the sense of rulers, but of *teachers*. Hence the sense is: Do not rashly enter upon the office of a teacher. The meaning is not to be limited, as is done by Calvin, to the office of a reprover—'masters of morals;' but is to be understood generally. Such an assumption of the office and authority of teachers was very prevalent among the Jews. The Pharisees loved to be called of all men 'Rabbi, Rabbi' (Matt. xxiii. 7). St. Paul, adverting to the Jews, says that they were confident of their ability to be guides to the blind, and teachers of the foolish (Rom. ii. 19, 20); and he finds fault with them for desiring to be teachers of the law, whilst at the same time they understood neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed (1 Tim. i. 7). And this craving to be teachers would be naturally carried by the converted Jews into the Christian church. The opportunity of exercising the office of teachers was greater in these days of early Christianity than in ours, as it would seem that teaching was not then restricted to a particular class, but was exercised by believers generally. The exhortation is not without its use in the present day. Many, especially in a season of religious excitement, assume the office of teacher, without any qualification of knowledge or experience, and thus expose themselves to the reproof of St. James.—**knowing**, as ye well do, being well aware.—**that we**—we who are the teachers. St. James includes himself out of humility, and in order the better to propitiate his readers.—**shall receive the greater condemnation.** The meaning being that as the responsibility of teachers is great, they shall be the more strictly dealt with by God. Knowing that we shall undergo a stricter judgment than others in a private station.

Ver. 2. **For**: the reason assigned for the second clause of the last verse.—**in many things**: to be taken generally—'in many particulars:' not to be restricted to the offences of the tongue; the restriction follows in the latter part of the verse.—**we offend**: literally, 'we trip or stumble.' Human life is represented as a way, and particular actions as steps in that way; and hence acting amiss is represented as stumbling. Believers, though they may not actually fall, often stumble.—**all**: a strong expression in the Greek; 'we, all without exception.'—**If any offend not in word**—stumble not in his speech, **the same is a perfect man.** By 'a perfect man,' here and elsewhere in Scripture, is not meant a man who is absolutely free from sin, but one who is comparatively perfect. Thus Noah, Abraham, and Job were called perfect in their generations; and of Zacharias and Elizabeth it is said that 'they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless' (Luke i. 6). Hence, then, a perfect man is a man who has attained to a high degree of holiness. And certainly a man, whose words are inoffensive, may have his imperfections, but, compared with those who have little command over their tongues, who give an unbridled licence to their speech, he is a perfect man. 'He that can rule his tongue shall live without strife' (Sir. xix. 6).—**and able also to bridle his whole body**: qualified to keep the body under subjection; that is, has obtained the mastery over himself, inasmuch as it is more difficult to bridle the tongue than to control the actions of the life. A man's character is known by his words: 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh' (Matt. xii. 34): even as the nature of a fountain is known by the quality of the stream which issues from it. Hence the wise saying of Socrates, 'Speak, that I may know thee.' Offences of the tongue are the most common of all offences. 'There is one that slippeth in his speech, but not from his heart;

and who is he that hath not offended with his tongue?' (Sir. xix. 16). Even the meekness of Moses was violated by a rash word: 'he spake unadvisedly with his lips' (Ps. cvi. 33).

Ver. 3. St. James introduces two illustrations to prove the truth of his remark, that if a man is able to command his tongue, he is able also to command his whole conduct. The first illustration, that of the bit in the horses' mouths, was naturally suggested by what he had just said about bridling the whole body. **Behold.** The best manuscripts read, 'But if:' as if St. James had said, 'But if you doubt the truth of my assertion, consider how the horse is bridled.'—**we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.** As the horses are governed by bits in their mouths, so are we governed by the tongue in our mouths. The chief point of comparison here is that of governing.

Ver. 4. **Behold also the ships, which, though they be so great.** The ships of the ancients were often very large, as may be seen in the case of the ship which conveyed Paul to Malta, which contained two hundred and seventy-six persons (Acts xxvii. 37); but the comparison is even more forcible in our days, as our ships are still larger.—**and are driven of fierce winds.** These fierce winds may denote human passions, which the government of the tongue controls.—**yet they are turned about by a very small helm whithersoever the governor listeth:** literally, 'whithersoever the inclination or impulse of the steersman willeth.' The little helm controlleth the fury of the winds and waves. Here there is an additional point of comparison, namely, the smallness of the instrument employed in governing.

Ver. 5. **Even so.** Now follows the application of the two illustrations. If we rule our tongues, we govern the whole man; for the tongue is to the man what the bit is to the horse, or the helm to the ship.—**the tongue is a little member:** the reference being to the smallness of the helm. The tongue is small in proportion to the whole body, and to many of its members.—**and boasteth great things:** boasteth, instead of worketh or doeth, because boasting is specially applicable to the tongue. The word is not here, however, employed to denote a vain ostentation; for, as is evident from the context, the tongue not only boasteth great things, but makes good its boasts. Hence the meaning is, 'exerts immense influence.'—**Behold how great a matter:** or 'forest,' as it is in the Greek, suited to the lively and figurative style of St. James.—**a little fire kindleth.** A single spark may set a whole forest on fire, as is often the case with the forests of America. The reading of manuscripts is here different. Some MSS. read, 'How great a fire kindleth a great forest;' the allusion being to the greatness of the conflagration, whilst the smallness of the spark is left out of consideration. Some critics translate the words without any reference to size: 'What a fire kindles what a forest.' The reading in our version is to be preferred, as being best adapted to the apostle's train of thought, bringing prominently forward the smallness of the fire (comp. Ps. lxxxiii. 14; Isa. ix. 18). We are here taught, most emphatically, the power of the tongue. Speech is that which distinguishes man from the inferior animals. It is a powerful instrument for good or evil. On the side of good it preaches the Gospel, pleads the cause of the innocent and oppressed, stirs up to the performance of noble deeds, diffuses the light of truth, procures liberty to the captive, comforts the sad and sorrowful, and supports the dying in their last moments. Sweet waters flow from this fountain of humanity. But bitter waters also flow. On the side of evil the tongue sows the seeds of moral pestilence and death, corrupts men's morals, spreads the leaven of wickedness, persuades to vice and all manner of sin, diffuses the poison of infidelity and ungodliness, gives rise to bitter contentions, dissolves friendships, disturbs the peace of a whole neighbourhood, and is not less powerful for evil than for good. 'Many have fallen by the edge of the sword; but not so many as have fallen by the tongue' (Sir. xxviii. 18).

Ver. 6. **And the tongue is a fire**—possesses the destructive power of fire.—**a world of iniquity.** These words have been differently translated. Some render them as follows: 'The tongue is a fire, the world of iniquity the forest;' but this is an unwarrantable insertion of the words 'the forest.' Others connect the words with what follows: 'The tongue is a fire. As a world of unrighteousness the tongue is among our members:' but it is best to consider 'the world of iniquity' in apposition with the tongue, as is done in our version. Hence the meaning is: the tongue is a combination of all that is evil. The expression is of similar import to that of St. Paul, when he calls the love of money 'the root of all evil' (1 Tim. vi. 10).—**So is,** or rather 'so makes itself,' or 'so steps forward:' so is constituted **the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body,** is the cause of universal pollution, **and setteth on fire,** inflameth, **the course of nature.** This phrase has been very differently translated, and indeed is in our version hardly intelligible. The word rendered 'course' denotes something that revolves, and is generally used of a wheel; and the words 'of nature' are in the Greek 'of birth,' or metaphorically 'of creation.' Hence the literal translation is 'the wheel of life' or 'of creation.' Some accordingly understand it of the whole creation—'the orb of creation;'[1] the meaning being that the tongue sets the universe in flames; but it is extremely improbable that St. James would use such a strong hyperbole. Others consider it as a figurative expression for the body;[2] but such an explanation is forced, and it is improbable that St. James would express that figuratively which he had immediately before expressed in plain terms. Others suppose that by it the successive generations of men are meant—'the circle of human existence:'[3] the meaning being that, as the tongue set our forefathers on fire, so it has the same pernicious effect on us and on all succeeding generations; but this is a meaning which is too vague and indirect. It is best to understand by the phrase the circle of the individual's own life, and which commences its revolutions at his birth; hence it is to be translated 'the circle or wheel of life.'[4] 'The present life of man,' says Benson, 'is here compared to a wheel which is put in motion at our birth, and runs swiftly until death stops it. The tongue often sets this wheel on a flame, which sometimes sets on fire the whole machine.'—**And it is set on fire,** inflamed or inspired, **of,** or by, **hell:** Gehenna, the place of future torment,

[1] So Alford, Basset. [2] Wiesinger. [3] Stäudlin.
[4] So Erdmann Brückner, Plumptre.

different from Sheol or Hades. the place of disembodied spirits. Except in the synoptical Gospels, the word Gehenna is only found here in the New Testament. It denotes 'the valley of Hinnom,' and was used by the Jews to signify the place of future punishment, because it was in that valley that the rites of human sacrifice were practised, and a perpetual burning was kept up for its cleansing. The reference here is not to the future punishment of the tongue, but to the source from which it derived its destructive properties, namely, from hell—that is, from the devil. 'A bad tongue,' as Estius says, 'is the organ of the devil.' At Pentecost the outpouring of the Spirit was manifested by tongues of fire which lighted upon the disciples, and enabled them to speak with new tongues; the tongue was then set on fire of heaven; but that tongue which we have by nature, unpurified by grace, is often kindled from hell.

Ver. 7. **For every kind**: literally, every nature or disposition.—**of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea**: the inferior creation arranged under its usual fourfold classification—beasts of the earth, fowls of heaven, creeping things, and fish of the sea.—**is tamed**—better, 'is subdued,' as we can hardly say that all the inferior animals are tamed, many of them being incapable of being so; but they may all be subdued.—**and hath been tamed**, subdued.—**of mankind**: literally, 'by the nature of men,' answering to the nature of the inferior animals mentioned above; hence 'by human nature.'

Ver. 8. **But**, expressive of contrast, **the tongue**, generally considered—whether our own tongue or the tongue of others—**can no man tame** or subdue. The tongue is more unconquerable than the wildest animal. No man can master his own tongue, or subdue that of the slanderer or the liar; we require the grace of God for this.—**it is an unruly evil**—incapable of being curbed, full of disturbance. The best manuscripts read, 'it is a restless evil'—incapable of being quieted.—**full of deadly poison**: the reference being to the poison of serpents which was supposed to be connected with their tongues. Compare the words of the Psalmist, referred to by St. Paul (Rom. iii. 13): 'They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips' (Ps. cxl. 3). Hence the importance and difficulty of the government of the tongue. We must pray for the grace of God 'to keep our mouths as with a bridle.' We must steer this little helm aright, lest we should make shipwreck of our immortal hopes. We must be cautious of every little spark, lest the infernal flames should burst forth, and spread devastation over the whole circle of our lives.

Ver. 9. **Therewith**: literally, 'in it,' 'acting in the sphere of the tongue;' hence, instrumentally, 'by it.'—**bless we God, even the Father**. The best manuscripts read, 'bless we the Lord and Father,' an unusual combination; both terms apply to God the Father. To praise God is the proper use of the tongue.—**and therewith**, by it, **curse we men**—the improper and opposite use of the tongue.—**which are made after the similitude**, or likeness, **of God**. Man was originally created after the Divine image (Gen. i. 26); and this image, although marred and obscured, is not, as some rashly affirm, obliterated by sin. Thus murder was declared to be punishable by death, because man was made in the image of God (Gen. ix. 6). Man in his understanding and affections, and especially in his conscience, still bears the traces of the moral image of his Creator; indeed, it is by reason of this resemblance that we can attain to a knowledge of the perfections of God, and are rendered capable of religion. And this Divine image obscured by sin is restored by Christ (Col. iii. 10). This Divine similitude, then, we ought to respect both in ourselves and in others. He who curses man curses the image of God, and consequently God Himself in His image. It is evident that the reference is not to the original condition of man prior to the fall, but to his present state; for thus only can there be any force in the apostle's remark.

Ver. 10. **Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.** There is here a moral incongruity. 'The annals of Christendom,' observes Dean Plumptre, 'show that the necessity for the warning has not passed away. Councils formulating the faith, and uttering their curses on heretics; *Te Deums* chanted at an *Auto da Fé*, or after a massacre of St. Bartholomew; the railings of religious parties who are restrained from other modes of warfare, present the same melancholy inconsistency.'

Ver. 11. Now follow, after the apostle's method, two illustrations of this incongruity, taken from the natural world. **Doth a fountain send forth at the same place**: literally, 'at the same hole or fissure'—from the same spring.—**sweet water and bitter**: literally, 'the sweet and the bitter.'

Ver. 12. **Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?** that is, no tree can bring forth fruits inconsistent with its nature. The illustration here is not, that we must not expect bad fruits from a good tree, or conversely, good fruits from a bad tree, according to our Lord's illustration: 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' (Matt. vii. 16); but only that we must not expect different fruits from the same tree—figs and olives from the fig tree, or figs and grapes from the vine.—**so can no fountain yield salt water and fresh**; or, as other manuscripts have it, 'so neither can salt water bring forth sweet;' the salt water referring to the cursing, and the sweet or fresh water to the blessing. That cursing and blessing should proceed from the same mouth is as great an incongruity as that salt and fresh water should flow from the same spring. In the natural world no such incongruity exists, as does in the moral world. Man is a self-contradiction, acting continually inconsistently with his nature.

Ver. 13. With this verse a new section of the Epistle apparently begins, and yet in strict connection with what precedes. The connection appears to be as follows: The want of command over our tongues argues a defect in wisdom and knowledge; so that if you do not govern your tongues, your boast of these qualities is a mere pretence.—**Who is a wise man?** that is, Who among you professes to be such? The Jews were great pretenders to wisdom, and they as well as the Greek sophists gloried in the title of wise men; and indeed an assertion of wisdom is a general feature of the human race; humility is the rarest of virtues.—**and endued with knowledge among you?** There is not much difference between these two epithets, 'wise' and 'endued with knowledge.' Some understand wisdom as in-

telligence generally, and knowledge as a practical insight which judges correctly in particular cases. But, if we were to distinguish them, we would rather say that wisdom denotes the adaptation of means to ends, and knowledge the acquisition of particular facts; the knowledge of facts constitutes the materials with which wisdom works.—**let him shew**: let him make good his profession, let him prove his possession of wisdom and knowledge.—**out of**, or rather 'by,' **a good conversation**, 'by a holy conduct.' The word 'conversation' has altered its meaning since our translation was made; then it signified conduct, but now it is almost entirely restricted to speech.—**his works with meekness of wisdom**: not to be rendered 'in a meek wisdom,' or 'in a wise meekness;' but the genitive of possession, 'in wisdom's meekness,' that is, in that meekness which is the proper attribute of true wisdom; the meekness which belongs to wisdom and proceeds from it. Compare the somewhat similar sentiment of the Psalmist: 'What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile' (Ps. xxxiv. 12, 13); for the meekness of wisdom is seen in the government of the tongue.

Ver. 14. **But if ye have bitter envying**—zeal or emulation in a bad sense, as is evident from the epithet 'bitter,'—**and strife**, or rather factiousness, contention, party-strife; the reference being specially to religious controversies.—**in your hearts, glory not**, boast not, **and lie not**, by a false pretence to wisdom and knowledge, **against the truth**: not subjective, 'against veracity,' being destitute of the truth, which would render the passage tautological; but objective, 'against the truth of God,' namely the Gospel.

Ver. 15. **This wisdom**, that which gives rise to this false zeal and party-strife, **descendeth not from above, but is earthly**, in contrast to 'descendeth from above'—belongs to the earth. There are no heavenly aspirations about it; it overlooks or forgets the unseen world; it is limited to the affairs of the present life.—**sensual**. Hardly a correct rendering; literally, 'belongs to the soul,' not to the spirit. The contrast is well brought out in Jude 19: 'sensual, not having the spirit.' Elsewhere the word is translated 'natural.' 'There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body' (1 Cor. xv. 44). 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. ii. 14). There is a distinction drawn in Scripture between the soul and the spirit; the soul is the intellectual nature of man, that which qualifies him for this world; the spirit is his religious nature, that which renders him capable of religion, and assimilates him to God. Hence, then, the word is to be translated 'natural,' as upon the whole the best equivalent. This wisdom appertains to our natural mental powers, but takes no cognizance of our spiritual powers; it regards man as an intellectual being capable of knowledge, rather than as a spiritual being capable of holiness. These two epithets, earthly and natural, are perhaps negative qualities; the third quality is positively sinful.—**devilish**, devil-like, partaking of the nature of devils, similar to that wisdom which is possessed by evil spirits, like the tongue inspired by hell. This wisdom is often the cause of pride and ambition, of selfishness and malignity, and of all those vices which actuate the spirits of evil. Some suppose that the three great temptations of the world—avarice, a love of pleasure, and ambition—are here referred to; the first of which is earthly, the second sensual, and the third devilish, being the sin by which the devil fell; but this is refining too much. These three qualities—earthly, sensual, devilish—have their contrast in the qualities heavenly, spiritual, and divine.

Ver. 16. **For**, the reason assigned for the above description of earthly wisdom, **where envying and strife is**; where zeal (in a bad sense) and party-strife are, **there is confusion and every evil work**—all kinds of wickedness. Certainly the reference is primarily to religious controversy; but the supposition that the controversy between the Jewish and Gentile Christians is here referred to is without foundation.

Ver. 17. **But**. Now follows a description of the heavenly wisdom in contrast to the earthly. The heavenly wisdom is described by seven qualities which, as has been well said, are 'nothing but the seven colours of the one ray of light of heavenly truth which has appeared and been revealed in Christ Himself—the Wisdom of God.'—**the wisdom which is from above is first**, in the first place. Purity is its primary quality; all other qualities of heavenly wisdom are subservient to this. We must, however, beware of perverting this remark in the interests of intolerance and party-strife; these are the bitter fruits, not of heavenly, but of earthly wisdom.—**pure**, free from all impure and corrupt mixtures; separated from everything that offends; no stain of sin must pollute it; everything that is morally evil is abhorrent to its nature. The word is to be taken in its widest sense, as all sin is impurity.—**then peaceable**, opposed to envy and party-strife; desirous to make and maintain peace. The spirit of love will cause us, as much as possible, to live peaceably with all men; instead of strife there will be a readiness to be reconciled.—**gentle**, kind, forbearing, considerate, making every allowance for the ignorance and frailties of others, imitating the character of Him who is meek and lowly—'the gentle Jesus.'—**easy to be intreated**, or rather, easy to be persuaded, willing to be reconciled when differences arise, and always ready to meet its opponents half way.—**full of mercy and good fruits**, benevolent, compassionate to the afflicted, charitable to the poor, ready to extend relief and assistance to the destitute.—**without partiality**. This has been variously rendered. Some, 'without contending,' not entering into controversy; others, 'without judging,' not finding fault with others; others, 'not making a difference,' that is, impartial. Perhaps the most correct meaning, and most in accordance with the doctrine of St. James, is, 'without wavering or doubting;' not feeble or changeable, 'without vacillation' (see Note on Jas. ii. 4).—**and without hypocrisy**, without pretence, showing a naturalness in behaviour, meaning all the kindness it expresses, without affectation, its actions being in accordance with its words.

Ver. 18. **And the fruit of righteousness**. This does not mean 'the reward of righteousness,' nor 'the fruit which springs from righteousness,' but 'the fruit which consists in righteousness.' So in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, that chastisement yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb. xii. 11). As bitter emulation and party-strife are the fruits of earthly wisdom, so righteous-

ness is the fruit of heavenly wisdom. And by righteousness here is not meant the imputed righteousness of Christ, but moral goodness—righteousness in ourselves and in others, in habit and in practice.—**is sown**; the fruit being supposed to be contained in the seed. The sower is not God; but, as is evident from the context, the peacemakers.—**in peace.** Some render the words 'into peace,' meaning that they who are of a peaceful disposition will reap a harvest of peace both in this world and in the next; but this is giving a wrong meaning to the preposition. 'In peace' denotes the spirit with which the seed or fruit is sown.—**of them that make peace.** Some render this 'on behalf of them,' or, 'for the good of them that make peace.' But it gives a better meaning to regard the peacemakers as the sowers of righteousness, hence 'by them that make peace.' The meaning of the whole verse is: The seed of righteousness is sown by the peacemakers in a spirit of peace. Only those who are actuated by the spirit of peace are the true sowers of righteousness; whereas 'the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.'

CHAPTER IV. 1–12.

Government of the Passions.

1 FROM whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come*
they not hence, *even* of your lusts [a] that war [b] in your
2 members? Ye lust, and have not: [c] ye kill, and desire to
have,[1] and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet[2] ye have not,
3 because [d] ye ask not. Ye ask, and [e] receive not, because ye
4 ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon[3] your lusts. [f] Ye
adulterers and[4] adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship
of the world is [g] enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be
5 a friend of the world is[5] the enemy of God. Do ye think
that the scripture saith in vain,[6] The spirit that dwelleth[7] in us
6 lusteth to envy?[8] But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he
saith, [h] God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the
7 humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. [i] Resist the
8 devil, and he will flee from you. [k] Draw nigh to God, and he
will draw nigh to you. [l] Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and
9 purify *your* hearts, *ye* [m] double-minded. [n] Be afflicted, and
mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning,
10 and *your* joy to heaviness.[9] [o] Humble yourselves in the sight
of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.[10]
11 [p] Speak not evil one of[11] another, brethren. He that
speaketh evil of[12] *his* brother, and judgeth his brother,
[q] speaketh evil of[12] the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou
judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.
12 There is one lawgiver,[13] [r] who is able to save and destroy: who
art thou that [s] judgest another?[14]

[a] Rom. vii. 23.
[b] Rom. vi. 12, 13.
[c] 1 Jo. iii. 15; Mat. v. 22.
[d] Mat. vii. 7. [e] Jas. i. 6, 7.
[f] Mat. xii. 39; Mk. viii. 38; 2 Pet. ii. 14; Hos. ii. 2, 4.
[g] Rom. viii. 7; Mat. vi. 24.
[h] Prov. iii. 34; 1 Pet. v. 5.
[i] Eph. vi. 11, 16; 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.
[k] Zech. i. 3.
[l] Ps. xxiv. 4.
[m] Jas. i. 8.
[n] Mat. v. 4.
[o] Mat. xxiii. 12; 1 Pet. v. 6.
[p] Mat. vii. 1; Rom. ii. 1; 1 Cor. iv. 5.
[q] Rom. xiv. 4.
[r] Mat. x. 28.
[s] Rom. xiv. 4.

[1] and envy
[2] *All MSS. omit* yet. *Put a full stop after* war, *and omit* yet
[3] spend it in
[4] *Best MSS. omit* adulterers and
[5] is constituted
[6] *Insert note of interrogation after* vain
[7] *Some MSS. read*, He made to dwell
[8] Does the spirit that dwells in us long towards envy?
[9] dejection
[10] exalt you
[11] Speak not one against
[12] speaketh against
[13] *Best MSS. read*, One is the lawgiver and judge
[14] *Best MSS. read*, thy neighbour

CONTENTS. St. James warns his readers against those evil passions which gave rise to wars and fightings among them. They must moderate their desires, and guard against self-gratification. If they placed their chief affections on the things of the world, they were alienated from God, for no one could be a friend of the world without being the enemy of God. The declarations of Scripture against worldliness were not made for no purpose; and the promptings of the indwelling Spirit did not lead to strife and envy. They must cultivate submission to God, resistance to the devil, outward and inward purity, repentance, and humility. They must avoid all evil-speaking and censoriousness. They must not set themselves up as judges of one another; but ever remember that there is one Lawgiver and Judge, who has the power to carry His judgments into effect, and to whom all must give an account.

Ver. 1. **From whence come wars and fightings among you?** Other manuscripts read, Whence wars and whence fightings among you? The connection is as follows:—St. James had been reproving his readers for envy and party-strife, which was the occasion of contentions among them (iii. 16); and he now proceeds to trace those mischiefs to their origin in their sinful lusts. The sudden transition from the fruit of righteousness sown by the peacemakers to the prevalence of wars and fightings, is startling. Indeed, the expressions used in this passage, wherein the readers are accused of wars and fightings, are said to kill, and are called adulterers, are so strong, that at first sight one might suppose the Epistle to be addressed to the unbelieving Jews, to whose state and character these expressions literally applied, and not to Jewish Christians, to whom they could be only figuratively applicable; but the whole spirit and structure of the Epistle prove that it was written to believers. We must make allowance for the vehement style of the writer. Besides, we are not to suppose an ideal excellence as existing in the primitive Church; we learn, especially from the two Epistles to the Corinthians, that it had its faults and blemishes; the converts carried with them into Christianity many of the vices of their unconverted state. This is the case with our modern missions; the vices which are prevalent among their unconverted countrymen are those to which the converts are most exposed and most inclined. Now a contentious spirit was a Jewish vice. Wars and fightings were at this time the condition of the Jewish nation; indeed, it was this contentious spirit that was the cause of their ruin. The Jewish Christians had not emancipated themselves from this national character. The terms 'wars' and 'fightings' express the bitter contentions which prevailed among them; 'wars' denoting a state of contention generally, and 'fightings' particular outbreaks of it. These contentions are not to be limited to disputes among teachers or to religious controversies, but are to be understood generally—all those quarrels which arise from our sinful passions and selfish desires. More than eighteen centuries ago the Prince of Peace visited this earth, and the Gospel announcing 'peace on earth' was proclaimed; and yet there are still wars and fightings in the Church and in the world.—**come they not hence.** James by a second question answers his first, appealing to the consciences of his readers.—**even of your lusts** or pleasures. Their evil desires were the occasion of their contentions; desires after worldly objects—the greed of gain or influence. And such has been the cause of all the wars which have devastated this earth; these spring from the evil passions of men. 'Nothing,' observes Plato, 'but the body and its lusts and appetites kindle sedition, quarrels, and wars in this world.'—**that war.** There is no necessity to supply 'against the mind,' or 'against the soul.' There are different forms of this war of our lusts. There is the war between the sensual inclination and the conscience; between indwelling sin and the principle of grace in the renewed man; and between one sinful lust and another, as for example between avarice and ambition. There is the law of the members warring against the law of the mind (Rom. vii. 23). But it is not to these forms of war that St. James alludes; the lusts are rather considered as a combined force warring against our fellow-men; he does not speak of the state of internal war in the soul, but of active contention against others.—**in your members.** The lusts have their seat in our bodily members; and these members are the instruments which they use in accomplishing their purposes. Thus St. Paul says: 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin' (Rom. vi. 12, 13).

Ver. 2. **Ye lust and have not.** This verse further describes the origin or genesis of these external strifes. First, then, is the evil desire; then this desire, being ungratified, leads to hatred and envy; and hatred and envy lead to wars and fightings (comp. Jas. i. 15). The objects of desire are worldly blessings—the gratification of our sinful interests. This spirit of restless desire was also at this time the national character of the Jews; they were restless under the government of the Romans, and eagerly desired national liberty and the lordship over other nations. These desires were especially fostered by their belief in an earthly Messiah, who should bestow worldly blessings on His followers. This Jewish vice was prevalent among the Jewish Christians, and perhaps the false notion of an earthly Messiah was not eradicated from among them.—**ye kill**; expressive of the bitterness of the hatred that prevailed. If this Epistle were addressed to the Jews generally, these words would receive a literal meaning; but we can hardly suppose that the contentions among the Jewish Christians led to actual bloodshed, although such has often been their result in the history of the Church. The words, then, are to be understood in a modified sense, denoting that bitter hatred which, according to the spirit of the Gospel, is equivalent to murder: 'Ye kill in spirit.' 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer' (1 John iii. 15). Compare with this the words of our Lord: 'Ye have heard that it has been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment' (Matt. v. 21, 22). Not the external act, but the internal disposition, the bitter hatred, is described. Strong and vehement expressions are characteristic of the style of St. James.—**and desire to have**; or rather, 'and envy'—indulge in a

resentful and envious spirit toward others.—**and cannot obtain**, namely, that on account of which you indulge in hatred and envy.—**ye fight and war**; the third stage in the genesis of contention. —**yet**; this word is not in the Greek. It is best to put a full stop after 'war,' and begin a new clause, showing the reason why their desires were not gratified, either because they asked not, or asked wrongfully.—**ye have not, because ye asked not.** There seems here a reference to our Lord's declaration: 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' And it is also here implied that we are permitted to ask for temporal blessings, only we must not ask wrongly.

Ver. 3. **Ye ask, and receive not**: as if to anticipate the reply of his readers that they did ask, but still did not receive the object of their desires.—**because ye ask amiss**: or wrongly, wickedly; either in an improper spirit, without faith in God as the Hearer of prayer; or rather for improper objects, for worldly things which are pernicious in themselves or prejudicial to the petitioner—for the sole purpose of self-gratification, without any thought of the glory of God. Such asking is equivalent to not asking.—**that ye may consume it** (that which ye ask) on, or spend it in, **your lusts**: in order to gratify your own sinful desires. The meaning is: if you pray in a proper spirit, these selfish desires, which are the occasion of those bitter contentions among you, would cease to exist.

Ver. 4. **Ye adulterers and adulteresses.** The best manuscripts read only 'ye adulteresses,' a reading more suitable to the metaphor employed. This appellation might be taken literally, if we referred it to the unbelieving Jews; but, as referring to the Jewish Christians, it can only be understood in a metaphorical sense. It is spiritual adultery to which St. James here alludes. He here adopts the language of an Old Testament prophet. By the prophets God is represented as the 'Husband of His people,' and sin, especially the sin of idolatry, as unfaithfulness to Him. Nor is this metaphor confined to the Old Testament. Our Lord, on two occasions at least, calls the Jews 'an adulterous generation' (Matt. xii. 39; Mark viii. 38); and St. Peter speaks of wicked Christians as 'having eyes full of adultery' (2 Pet. ii. 14). The believer is considered as married to the Lord (Rom. vii. 4); and the world is God's rival, that which seduces our affections from Him. St. James, in using this strong and startling epithet, gives vent to his moral indignation. He is filled with holy anger on account of the contentions that prevailed among them.—**know ye not that the friendship of the world.** This is not to be restricted to the indulgence of sinful lusts, or to an eager pursuit after the carnal pleasures of the world; but by this is meant an over-attachment to worldly objects, an eager craving after the riches or influence of the world; in short, worldliness, worldly desires without any thought of God, a preference of the world to Him.—**is enmity with God.** God and the world here stand opposed to each other as rivals: so that we cannot love the one without rejecting the other—'Ye cannot serve God and mammon' (Matt. vi. 24). The more the world occupies our hearts, the less room there is in them for God, and the more forgetful are we of the world to come.—**whosoever therefore will be**: literally, 'whosoever wishes to be'—has chosen the world as his portion.—**the friend of the world**—resolves to cultivate its friendship and favour as his chief good—**is**, or rather, 'constitutes himself,' 'sets himself up as,' **the enemy of God.**

Ver. 5. The meaning of this verse is very difficult: it is one of the dark sayings of Scripture. This difficulty arises from two causes: from the fact that no such passage, as St. James apparently quotes, is to be found in the Old Testament; and from the supposed quotation itself being obscure, and susceptible of different and even opposite meanings. **Do you think that the Scripture saith in vain**: that its declaration is made for no purpose. These words appear to introduce a scriptural quotation; but no passage can be found which expresses the subjoined sentiment. Various passages, both in the Old Testament and in the New, have been adduced, but not one which is identical with the supposed quotation. Some, indeed, think that the quotation cited is that contained in the Book of Proverbs, mentioned in the next verse, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble,' and that all that intervenes is to be considered as a parenthesis;[1] but this is a forced method of removing the difficulty. It is best to suppose that St. James alludes, not to any particular quotation, but to the general scope of Scripture: Do you think that the scriptural declarations are made in vain? This may refer to the sentiment that follows: or, as we think is better, to what precedes, to the scriptural denunciations against worldliness, and the indulgence of hatred and envy.—**the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.** These words have given rise to a vast variety of interpretations. According to our version, the meaning is that the Scriptures declare that our depraved nature is given to envy. But to this it has been forcibly objected that 'the spirit that dwelleth in us' is a spirit different from ourselves, and therefore cannot denote our depraved nature. Accordingly, some think that the 'spirit of evil,' or Satan, is here meant. But, although such an expression as 'Satan dwelling within us' may be admissible, yet this meaning is contradicted by the next verse: 'He giveth more grace,' which would require 'God' to be inserted as its subject. Others suppose that by 'the Spirit that dwelleth in us' is meant the Holy Spirit, and they give to the words 'to envy' an adverbial import: they think that the metaphor introduced by the words 'adulteresses' is still carried on; and accordingly they give the following rendering to the words: 'The Spirit which dwelleth in us jealously desireth us for His own.'[2] But to this it is objected that the word rendered 'envy' is always used in Scripture in a bad sense, and that the words 'us for his own' are inserted in the text. Some render the clause: 'The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth against envy;' but this gives a false meaning to the preposition. Another translation is to understand by 'the spirit' the human spirit, and to consider it not as the subject but as the object of the verb. Accordingly the following interpretation is given: 'God eagerly desires the spirit that dwelleth in us.'[3] But here also an erroneous meaning is given to the words rendered in our version 'to envy;' and 'the spirit that

[1] This is Huther's solution of the difficulty.
[2] So Alford, Brückner, Basset, and Plumptre.
[3] So Erdmann and Dean Scott, who, however, understand by the spirit the Holy Spirit, which is tautological.

dwelleth in us' is a strange circumlocution for the human spirit. It gives the best translation, and the one freest from difficulties, to refer 'the Spirit that dwelleth in us' to the Holy Spirit, and to suppose that there are here two distinct questions:[1] Do you think that the Scripture speaks in vain? Are its declarations against worldliness, and strife, and envy, a mere empty sound? Does the Spirit that dwells in us lust to envy? Does He encourage such worldly affections? Are the fruits of the Spirit envy, and strife, and worldliness, and not rather love, joy, peace? 'Some,' observes Calvin, 'think that the soul of man is meant, and read the sentence affirmatively, that the spirit of man as it is depraved is infected with envy. They, however, think better who regard the Spirit of God as intended: for it is He that is given to dwell in us. I then take the Spirit as that of God, and read the sentence as a question; for it was the apostle's object to prove that because they envied they were not ruled by the Spirit of God.' Another important, and perhaps better attested, reading of the Greek is 'caused to dwell,' instead of 'dwelleth;' but this is also in conformity with the interpretation given above: 'Does the Spirit which He caused to dwell in us lust to envy?' If that be the correct reading, the interpretation given in our version is erroneous; for our depraved nature can never be described as 'the spirit which God caused to dwell in us.'

Ver. 6. **But he**, that is, God, or rather the indwelling Spirit, the immediate antecedent.—**giveth more**, or greater, **grace**. Here also there is a difficulty in determining what 'more' refers to: this depends on the meaning given to the former clause. Some render it 'greater than the world gives:' others, 'greater than the strength of depravity that exists within us.' Perhaps the most correct meaning is: Just because the Spirit does not lust to envy; and yet there is a lust to envy in man: therefore, to overcome this lust, He giveth more grace.—**Wherefore he saith**: that is, God or the Spirit saith. This is better than the rendering 'the Scripture saith.'—**God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.** The quotation is from the Book of Proverbs, and is according to the Septuagint, except that there we have the word 'Lord' instead of 'God.' The same quotation, and with the same variation, occurs in the First Epistle of Peter (1 Pet. v. 5). The words in our version are, 'Surely he scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace to the lowly' (Prov. iii. 34). By the proud here are meant the contentious—those who eagerly desire worldly objects; and by the humble, those who have overcome their worldly desires and govern their passions.

Ver. 7. Now follow several exhortations to enforce humility and the subjection of the passions. **Submit yourselves therefore to God.** Because God resisteth the proud, therefore submit yourselves to Him. Submission is the first step of the sinner's return to God; and the same spirit of submission accompanies the believer in every succeeding stage. Submission is the parent of patience, contentment, freedom from petulance, trust, hope, and other blessed and peaceful graces; whereas the want of submission gives rise to ungoverned desires, envy, hatred, and all those passions which are the cause of bitter contentions.—**Resist the devil.** Submission to God implies resistance to all that is evil, and to the devil the spirit of evil, especially as the devil is the author of pride and contention. We must realize our spiritual enemy, and resist him with spiritual weapons (Eph. vi. 11, 16), especially by the exercise of constant watchfulness and prayer on our part. Compare the words of St. Peter: 'Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith' (1 Pet. v. 8, 9).—**and he will flee from you.** 'We may,' says Benson, 'chase away the devil not by holy water, nor by the sign of the cross, but by steady virtue and resolute goodness.'

Ver. 8. **Draw nigh to God**: not to be limited to prayer, but to be understood of our intercourse with God generally.—**and he will draw nigh to you.** Compare the words of Zechariah: 'Turn ye unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts' (Zech. i. 3).—**Cleanse your hands, ye sinners.** The priests before they ministered at the altar, and the people before they prayed, always washed their hands, thus intimating the purity with which we ought to approach God. The hands are specially mentioned as being the instruments of wickedness.—**and purify your hearts.** The cleansing of the hands refers to external, and the purification of the hearts to internal purity; the one to the absence from contention, and the other to freedom from those lusts which were the cause of contention; the external and the internal must correspond: we must have 'clean hands and a pure heart' (Ps. xxiv. 4). There is not much difference in the two words here rendered 'cleansing' and 'purifying:' the former is freedom from stain or blemish, the latter is consecrated or set apart.—**ye double-minded**: having, as it were, two souls—the one professing to be attached to God, and the other really attached to the world. The epithets 'sinners' and 'double-minded' refer not to different, but to the same class of persons.

Ver. 9. **Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep**—namely, over your envy and hatred, your strifes and contentions, and the miseries occasioned by them. The epithets 'sinners' and 'double-minded' imply the necessity of repentance; and true repentance must ever be accompanied with godly sorrow. — **let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness**: feelings which are more appropriate for the occasion.

Ver. 10. **Humble yourselves.** All the above exhortations are enforcements of humility.—**in the sight of the Lord**: that is, before the Lord, as in His presence. The Lord is, as is usual in the Epistle of St. James, not Christ, but God.—**and he shall lift you up**, or rather exalt you, both in this world by His grace, and in the next world to His glory. The true way to exaltation is through humility. Compare the very similar words in St. Peter's Epistle: 'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time' (1 Pet. v. 6); and the words of our Lord: 'Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted' (Matt. xxiii. 12). Humility is one of the rarest and one of the most lovely of all graces. It is the direct opposite of that contentious, envious, and resentful spirit which St. James here so vehemently condemns;

[1] So the Revised Version.

peace and contentment are its inseparable associates. Humility is the true spirit of all obedience; submission is the perfection of virtue; and resignation to the Divine will is just another term for universal holiness.

Ver. 11. Here a new sentence begins, and yet in close connection with the preceding. St. James returns to the sins of the tongue, and cautions his readers against that sinful judging and censuring which was the effect of their bitter contentions.—**Speak not evil one of another, brethren.** Evil speaking has its origin in resentment and envy. Those whom we do not like, or who are our successful rivals, we are apt to depreciate. On the other hand, humility in the sight of God will show itself in humility with reference to our fellow-men: we will think humbly of ourselves, and so will not be so apt to undervalue others. Of course, all evil speaking is not here forbidden; we are bound to direct attention to the wicked, as a warning to others; but the evil speaking which St. James here condemns, is sinful censuring; judging the motives and character of men; pretending to see into their hearts, and discerning the motives of their actions; condemning them without good reason from prejudice and envy, and thus usurping the judicial authority of God.—**He that speaketh evil of his brother and judgeth his brother.** Judging here is used, as it is often in Scripture, in the sense of condemning. Compare with this the prohibition of our Lord: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged' (Matt. vii. 1).—**speaketh evil of the law.** By the law here is meant the moral law, that law the summary of which is, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' and which St. James designates 'the royal law' (Jas. ii. 8). He who in a censorious spirit judges his brother, sets at nought this law of love, and thus speaks evil of it, or undervalues it.—**and judgeth the law.** Some suppose that by this is meant that he who judges his brother, judges the law by setting himself above it, pronouncing on its observance or non-observance by another (Alford). But it rather appears to mean: He that speaketh evil of his brother condemneth his brother; and in doing so, without necessary occasion, usurpeth the authority of the judge; a meaning, however, which is not essentially different. - **but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge:** by condemning thy fellow-men, thou steppest out of thy province, which is not to judge the law, but to obey it. Judgment is the province of God, the one Lawgiver, not of the subject to the law, and far less of the trangressor of the law.

Ver. 12. **There is one Lawgiver.** Most manuscripts read, 'There is one Lawgiver and Judge:' and this is more suitable to the context, as it is the province of a judge that is adverted to. These are not many, but one: one pre-eminently and exclusively. All human lawgivers and judges derive their authority from God, and are only to be obeyed when their commands are not opposed to His. God is the source of all authority, the fountain of justice.—**who is able:** who has both the authority to command and the power to execute.—**to save and to destroy. Who art thou:** expressing the insignificance of man: thou, who art so ignorant and so erring, so sinful and so liable to fall; thou, who hast no power and no authority; thou, who art thyself guilty and as a sinner obnoxious to the judgment of God: how darest thou invade the office of this supreme and universal Lawgiver and Judge, and expose thyself to His condemnation?—**that judgest another?** Compare the words of Paul: 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?' (Rom. xiv. 4).

CHAPTER IV. 13–V. 6.

Warnings to the Rich.

13 GO to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go
into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and
14 sell,[1] and get gain; whereas[2] ye know not what *shall be* on the
[a] morrow: for what *is* your life? [b] It is even[3] a vapour, that
15 appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that
ye *ought* to say,[4] [c] If the Lord will, we shall[5] live, and do this
16 or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such
17 rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good,
and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

CHAP. V. 1. Go to now, [d] *ye* rich men, weep and howl for[6] your
2 miseries that shall come upon[7] *you*. Your riches are corrupted,
3 and your garments [e] are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is

[a] Prov. xxvii. 1.
[b] Wisd. ii. 4; Hos. vi. 4, xiii. 3.
[c] Acts xviii. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 19, xvi. 7.
[d] Jas. ii. 6, 7.
[e] Job xiii. 28; Isa. li. 8; Mat. vi. 19, 20; Acts xx. 33.

[1] will spend there a year, and will traffic.
[2] *This 14th verse to be printed as a parenthesis.*
[3] *Best MSS. read,* For ye are
[4] instead of saying
[5] *insert* both
[6] howling over
[7] are coming on

cankered ;[8] and the rust of them shall be [f] a witness against[9] you, and shall eat your flesh as it were[10] [g] fire. Ye have
4 [h] heaped treasure together for[11] the last days. Behold, [i] the hire of the labourers which have reaped down[12] your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, [k] crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of [l] the Lord
5 of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure[13] on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as[14] in a [m] day of
6 slaughter. Ye have condemned *and* killed [n] the just;[15] *and*[16] he doth not resist you.

[f] Hab. ii. 11.
[g] Ps. xxi. 9.
[h] Rom. ii. 5; Ps. xxxix. 6.
[i] Lev. xix. 13; Deut. xxiv. 5; Mal. iii. 5.
[k] Gen. iv. 10.
[l] Rom. ix. 29.
[m] Jer. xii. 3.
[n] Acts iii. 14, 15. vii. 52; Wis. ii. 12–20.

[8] corroded [9] to [10] *omit* it were [11] in
[12] mowed [13] delicately [14] *The best MSS. omit* as
[15] ye condemned, ye killed the just one
[16] *omit* and, *and insert semicolon after* just one

CONTENTS. St. James, having warned his readers against worldliness, and exhorted them to humility before God, proceeds to censure the rich for their forgetfulness of their dependence upon God, their proud confidence in their worldly plans, and their arrogant boasting as if they were their own masters; he reminds them of the brevity and uncertainty of life, and exhorts them to acknowledge God in their worldly transactions, and to realize His absolute power over them. He then apostrophizes the ungodly rich, and, like an Old Testament prophet, pronounces their doom. Their riches, their garments, their gold and silver would all perish; they had accumulated treasure for the day of wrath. Especially he mentions three crying sins which drew upon them the Divine vengeance: their injustice toward their labourers, their luxury and self-indulgence, and their oppression of the righteous.

Ver. 13. It is a matter of dispute and considerable difficulty to whom this passage is addressed; whether James is here addressing unworthy members of the Christian Church, who had not yet laid aside the Jewish vices of their unconverted state; or whether he admonishes the oppressors of the Jewish Christians, the unbelieving Jews, the ungodly and rich in this world. Three reasons have been assigned in support of the opinion that unbelievers are here addressed. 1. The address 'Go to,' again repeated (chap. v. 1), seems to indicate that the words in the two apostrophes are addressed to those without the Church. 2. Those addressed are not designated as 'brethren,' as is the usual custom of St. James, nor are any marks given to indicate that they are Christians. 3. Their ungodly conduct is so described that it can only be applicable to those without the church, and their doom is pronounced without any call to repentance. Others affirm that we are ignorant of the extent of moral corruption in the early Church, and that it was not the practice of the sacred writers to address those who were outside of the Christian community. Perhaps the most correct opinion is to assume that the first part of the passage, to the end of the fourth chapter, is an admonition to the worldly members of the Church; and that the second part, commencing at the beginning of the fifth chapter, is an apostrophe to the rich and the ungodly in the world. The passage is divided into two distinct portions, each beginning with the address 'Go to;' and there is no reason to conclude that the persons thus similarly addressed in both paragraphs were the same. We consider, then, that those here addressed in the first paragraph were members of the Christian Church. **Go to**, a call to attention, found only here and in the beginning of the next chapter.—**now**: this being the case; an inference from the preceding warning against worldliness and presumptuous confidence.—**ye that say, To-day or to-morrow**; other manuscripts read 'to-day and to-morrow;' but the difference in meaning is slight.—**we will go into such a city**: literally, into this city or the city in the intention of the speaker.—**and continue there a year**: literally, 'spend a year.' Other manuscripts read, 'Let us go into such a city, and let us spend there a year.'—**and buy and sell**: literally, 'traffic.'—**and get gain.** There could be nothing wrong in the mere merchandise; the sin consisted in a presumptuous confidence in themselves, and in a want of realization of their dependence on God. The practice referred to is still very common in the East. Merchants journey to some distant city with their stock of goods, and continue there until the whole is disposed of.

Ver. 14. **Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.** You are ignorant of what shall happen to you; your health and lives are not at your own disposal. Compare the similar thought in Proverbs: 'Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth' (Prov. xxvii. 1).—**For what is your life? It is even a vapour.** The best manuscripts read, 'Ye are even a vapour;' and this is a more lively and graphic form of expression. Ye are a mere vapour; a smoke, or an exhalation from the ground.—**that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.** A metaphor peculiar to St. James in the Scriptures; and, as has been well remarked, there is hardly a finer image in any author of the uncertainty, the brevity, and the vanity of human life. We are but as a smoke which is only seen to vanish; a vapour which rises from the ground at dawn, and disappears long before noon-day. A somewhat similar image is employed in the Book of Wisdom: 'Our names shall be forgotten in time, and no man shall have our works in

remembrance, and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof' (Wisdom ii. 4). Elsewhere in Scripture the brevity of human life is compared to a shadow that declineth, or to the fading of the flowers. Such is the vanity of life; we appear as a flash, and then are swallowed up in darkness.

Ver. 15. **For that ye ought to say**: literally, 'instead of your saying.' This verse is directly connected with the 13th, and the 14th verse is to be considered as a parenthesis. Ye say, 'To-day or to-morrow we shall go into such a city;' instead of saying, 'If the Lord will.' Ye assert your self-dependence, instead of humbly acknowledging your dependence on God.—**If the Lord will.** Compare with this expression of dependence the words of St. Paul: 'I will return again to you, if God will' (Acts xviii. 21); 'I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will' (1 Cor. iv. 19); 'I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit' (1 Cor. xvi. 7).—**we shall live and do this or that.** The words may be rendered, 'If the Lord will and we live, we shall do this or that.' But our version is better, as both the living and the doing are made dependent on God. The meaning being precisely the same as our common phrase: 'God willing (*Deo volente*), I shall do so and so.' We must, however, beware of allowing this expression of dependence to degenerate into a mere form, as is too frequently the case; it must be the real feeling of our heart. We must not only acknowledge in words, but deeply realize our dependence on God.

Ver. 16. **But**, in contrast to this spirit of dependence on God; instead of acknowledging God in all your ways.—**now**, as matters now stand; as is actually the case.—**ye rejoice**, literally 'ye glory,' **in your boastings**, in your vauntings, in your vainglory. Ye take a pleasure in this arrogant and presumptuous spirit, as if you were your absolute masters. By their boastings is to be understood not so much their vain talking, as their confident and groundless reliance on their own health and life; in short, a presumptuous reliance on themselves. Ye rejoice not in the Lord, as ye ought to do as Christians; but in your own vauntings.—**all such rejoicing**, or glorying, **is evil**, is sinful and wrong. It is rebellion against God—casting off your dependence upon Him. Nothing is so hateful to God as a proud and arrogant spirit.

Ver. 17. **Therefore**: not a mere general inference drawn from what St. James has said in the previous part of his Epistle, but a particular inference drawn from this spirit of vain boasting. —**to him that knoweth to do good**: not to be limited to mere benevolent actions, 'knoweth to do good works,' but to embrace our whole moral conduct—'knoweth to do what is right:' 'good' here is opposed to what is sinful and wrong.—**and doeth it not, to him it is sin.** The omission of good is undoubtedly a sin, as well as the commission of evil. We have here the statement of an important principle, which is susceptible of endless applications. The application in the present case appears to be as follows: You have the unquestionable knowledge of the uncertainty of life; you know that it is your duty to realize your dependence on God; if then you do not do so, it you act as if you were your own masters, to you it is sin. You know the right and do the wrong, and therefore are convicted of sin. (Compare John ix. 41.)

CHAP. V. 1. **Go to now.** Whoever may be the persons referred to in the preceding paragraph, we consider that the rich who are here addressed were unbelieving and wicked men not belonging to the Christian community. Some indeed consider that they are rich Christians;[1] but the crime charged upon them of condemning and killing the just cannot be applicable to believers. Hence, Stier correctly remarks: 'The rich men, whom St. James must here mean, are those already mentioned in chap. ii. 6, 7: those who practised violence on the disciples of Christ, the confessors of the Lord of glory, and blasphemed that good name by which they were called. To them St. James predicts, as a prophet and in the style of the old prophets, the impending judgment to which Jerusalem was doomed, the desolation of the land, and all the misery which he, like the Lord Himself, speaks of as His coming to judgment and salvation.' It has also been disputed whether we have here a pure and unmixed denunciation of evil, or a call to repentance. Certainly there is in the words no invitation to repentance, but a mere declaration of vengeance. 'They are mistaken,' observes Calvin, 'who consider that St. James here exhorts the rich to repentance. It seems to be a simple denunciation of God's judgment, by which he meant to terrify them, without giving them any hope of pardon, for all that he says tends only to despair.' But this must not be too absolutely assumed, for we learn in the case of Nineveh that all God's denunciations are likewise exhortations to repentance.—**ye rich men**: to be taken literally, rich in worldly wealth: the same who were formerly mentioned as the oppressors of believers (Jas. ii. 6, 7). The allusion is not to rich men as a class, but to the unbelieving rich. The words are applicable to all the rich who are living without God in the world; and certainly the rich are under a peculiar temptation of setting their affections upon the things of this world. Riches are too frequently an obstacle to salvation, a weight which prevents the soul soaring upwards to heaven.—**weep and howl for your miseries**: literally, 'weep, howling over your miseries.'—**that shall come upon you**: literally, 'that are coming upon you.' The miseries here referred to are those which shall precede or occur at the advent of the Lord; and also, as in our Lord's prophecy, those which occurred during the Jewish war, then close at hand, miseries which were typical of those which would occur at the advent. These miseries in the Jewish war fell heavily upon the rich. They as a class belonged to the moderate party, who, having much to lose, wished to avoid a war with the Romans, and therefore were especially persecuted by the Jewish zealots, who became the ruling party. Nor were these miseries confined to the Jews in Judea, but embraced the Jews of the dispersion—'the twelve tribes, scattered abroad.' There was at that time a general attack upon the Jews throughout the world. 'St. James,' observes Bishop Wordsworth, 'like a Christian Jeremiah, is uttering a Divine prophecy of the woes that are coming on Jerusalem and the Jews throughout the world.'

[1] So Erdmann.

Ver. 2. **Your riches are corrupted.** We have here a description of the doom that was to befall the rich. Your riches, in which you prided yourselves, and in which you trusted, will be taken from you. Some suppose, on account of the term 'corrupted,' that riches in grain are to be understood, which are liable to corruption; but this is refining too much: the word 'corrupted' is evidently a figurative term used to denote the perishable nature of the riches. The fact is stated, in a prophetical manner, in the past tense, as having already occurred—'your riches are corrupted,' denoting the certain and impending nature of the calamity.—**and your garments are moth-eaten.** The general idea of 'riches' is here specialized as consisting in garments and in treasure—silver and gold. Among the Orientals garments still often constitute a considerable portion of their riches (compare Matt. vi. 19; Acts xx. 33).

Ver. 3. **Your gold and your silver:** the other treasures in which their riches consisted.—**is cankered:** corroded, eaten through with rust. Literally, gold and silver do not contract rust, and hence various explanations have been given, as, for example, vessels plated with gold; but such explanations are childish: the expression may well be employed to denote the perishable nature of money.—**and the rust of them shall be a witness against you:** literally, 'shall be a testimony to you.' Some render this: the rust which you have allowed to accumulate on them from want of use shall testify against you in the judgment as an evidence of your parsimony and sinful hoarding. Thus Neander: 'As their unused treasures of gold and silver are devoured by rust, so this will be a witness against them, their guilt being apparent from this, that what they should have used for the advantage of others, they have suffered by want of use to be corrupted.' But such a meaning is contrary to the context: it is of the destruction of the rich that St. James here speaks, not of the evidence of their crime. Hence, then, the meaning is: the rust of them shall be a testimony to your destruction; the like destruction shall befall you which befalls your gold and silver.—**and shall eat your flesh:** the reference being not to the destruction of the body by care, to the corroding nature of riches, but to the infliction of the Divine judgment.—**as it were fire:** fire being the emblem of judgment: like fire shall the rust eat your flesh. So also we speak of the devouring fire. 'The Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them' (Ps. xxi. 9).—**Ye have heaped treasure together.** Some render this: 'Ye have accumulated treasures of wrath for the day of judgment,' similar to the words of St. Paul: 'Thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath' (Rom. ii. 5). But for this meaning the words 'of wrath' have to be supplied. It is best to render it: Ye have heaped together treasure for destruction; treasure which shall perish.—**for,** or in, **the last days:** not in the last days of your life; but either in the days that shall precede the coming of Christ, or in the last days of the Jewish nation, when those awful judgments threatened by the prophets and predicted by Jesus Christ will be poured out upon the unbelieving and ungodly Jews. We must not forget that it is to Jews that St. James writes; and 'the last days' is a Jewish expression for the age of the Messiah, and hence is fitly employed by the sacred writers to denote the end of the Jewish economy. The zealots during the Jewish war regarded it as a crime to be rich, and their insatiable avarice induced them to search into the houses of the rich, and to murder their inmates.

Ver. 4. Now follows a statement of the sins of the rich on account of which they are punished. Three sins are mentioned—injustice, luxury, and oppression. The first sin mentioned is injustice. **Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud.** Some connect the words 'of you' with 'crieth'—'crieth from you;' but our version is admissible, and the more simple. In the law of Moses, it was expressly forbidden to keep back the wages of hired labourers: 'Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him; the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning' (Lev. xix. 13). And again: 'Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy. At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee' (Deut. xxiv. 14, 15).—**crieth:** that is, for assistance to the defrauded, or rather for vengeance on the defrauders; like as Abel's blood crieth unto God (Gen. iv. 10). Compare with this the words of Malachi, which some suppose St. James had here in view: 'I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, saith the Lord of hosts' (Mal. iii. 5).—**and the cries of them that have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.** An Old Testament title of God, generally translated in our version, 'The Lord of hosts.'[1] It is only used here in the New Testament, and is highly appropriate, as it was an expression familiar to the Jewish Christians. In Rom. ix. 29, it occurs as a quotation from the Prophecies of Isaiah. It is expressive of the power of God; as, being the Lord of hosts, He has all agencies at His command, and therefore is able to respond to the cries of the oppressed.

Ver. 5. The second sin is luxury or self-indulgence. **Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton**—revelled. The Jews at this time were especially addicted to luxury and debauchery.—**ye have nourished your hearts,** that is, yourselves, **as in a day of slaughter.** The conjunction 'as' is omitted in the best manuscripts. Various meanings have been given to this expression. Some suppose that it denotes a day of feasting, indicative of the luxurious living of the rich; but the omission of the particle of comparison 'as' is opposed to this meaning, and besides it would be a mere repetition of the previous clause. Others think that it denotes the carelessness and infatuation of these revellers; that they were like cattle which graze and feed, on the very day of their slaughter, utterly unaware of their danger; the day of slaughter being here regarded as the day of God's vengeance. Perhaps the correct meaning is: You have nourished yourselves like fed beasts prepared for the slaughter. Thus Neander: 'As the ox is fattened which is led to the slaughter, so have ye by your devotion to the service of your lusts, and by enjoying your-

[1] The Septuagint generally render the phrase by 'Almighty:' compare Rev. iv. 8.

selves in all security, made yourselves ripe for the impending judgment.'

Ver. 6. The third sin is the oppression or persecution of the righteous. **Ye have condemned and killed the just**, or the just one—the just man, as the word 'just' is in the singular. These words have been usually referred to the condemnation and execution of our Lord by the Jews.[1] He is pre-eminently the Just One; and this appears from the Acts of the Apostles to be a common appellation of our Lord in the primitive Church, and perhaps also of the Messiah among the Jews. His murder is ever represented as the crowning sin of the Jewish nation. Thus St. Peter accuses the Jews of having denied the Holy One and the Just and of killing the Prince of life (Acts iii. 14); and with the same crime does the martyr Stephen charge his accusers: 'Your fathers have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers' (Acts vii. 52). And so also Justin Martyr says: 'Ye have killed the Just One, and before Him the prophets.' But there is nothing in the context to indicate this, and the words which follow, 'He doth not resist you,' are adverse to this meaning: they cannot refer to the non-resistance of Christ, as the verb is not in the past, but in the present tense. Some, indeed, suppose that the words denote 'God doth not resist you:' that, as a punishment for their crime in killing Christ, God withdrew from them His Spirit; His Spirit no longer strove with them. But such a meaning is far-fetched. Others read it as a question: 'And doth He, that is, God, not resist you?' We prefer the other interpretation, that by the just one is meant just men in general, an individual being taken to represent the class. Christ was the most flagrant, but not the only example of their killing the just. Stephen fell a prey to the fury of the Jews, and many more whose names are unrecorded; and the writer of this Epistle, who also was called the Just, was afterwards an instance of the fact here stated, 'Ye have condemned and killed the just one.'—**and he**, that is, Christ, if the expression, the Just One, is restricted to Him, though the present tense of the verb is somewhat opposed to this meaning; or the just man, used generally.—**doth not resist you**, referring either to the patience with which Christ endured His sufferings, or to the patience of just men in general. There is here a tacit reference to the vengeance of God, who adopts the cause of the just.

[1] So Lange, Basset, Dean Scott.

CHAPTER V. 7–20.

Various Admonitions.

7 BE patient therefore, brethren, unto [a] the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he [1] receive
8 [b] the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your
9 hearts: for the coming of the Lord [c] draweth nigh.[2] Grudge not [3] one against another, brethren, [d] lest ye be condemned: [4]
10 behold, the Judge standeth [e] before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of [f] suffering [5] affliction, and of patience.
11 Behold, we count them [g] happy [6] which endure. Ye have heard of [h] the patience of Job, and have seen the [i] end of the Lord; that [7] the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.
12 But above all things, my brethren, [k] swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and *your* nay, nay; [l] lest ye fall into
13 condemnation.[8] Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.
14 Is any [m] merry? [9] let him [n] sing psalms.[10] Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, [o] anointing him with oil in the name of the

[a] 2 Thes. ii. 1.
[b] Deut. xi. 14; Jer. v. 24; Job xxix. 23.
[c] Acts i. 7; Phil iv. 5; 1 Pet. iv. 7.
[d] Mat. vii. 1.
[e] Mat. xxiv. 33; Rev. iii. 20.
[f] Acts vii. 52.
[g] Mat. v. 12, 13.
[h] Tob. ii. 12; Ezek. xiv. 14.
[i] Job xlii. 12.
[k] Mat. v. 34–37; Deut. vi. 13.
[l] Ex. xx. 7.
[m] Acts xxvii. 22.
[n] Acts xvi. 25
[o] Mk. vi. 13; Lu. x. 34 Isa. i. 6.

[1] being patient over it, until it
[2] is near
[3] Murmur not
[4] judged
[5] *omit* suffering
[6] blessed
[7] how that
[8] under judgment
[9] cheerful
[10] let him praise

15 Lord: and [p] the prayer of faith shall save the sick,[11] and the Lord shall raise him up; and [q] if he have committed sins, they
16 shall be forgiven him. Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual
17 fervent prayer[12] of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man [r] subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it [s] might not rain; and it rained not on the
18 earth by the space of [t] three years and six months. And he prayed again, and [u] the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err[13] from the truth, and one
20 convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall [v] hide[14] a multitude of sins.

[p] 1 Cor. xii. 9, 10.
[q] Mat. ix. 2; 1 Cor. xi. 30
[r] Acts xiv. 15.
[s] 1 Kings xvii. 1.
[t] Lu. iv. 25; 1 Kings xviii. 1.
[u] 1 Kings xviii. 42, 45.
[v] Ps. xxxii. 1; Prov. x. 12; 1 Pet. iv. 8.

[11] the sick man
[12] The earnest prayer
[13] be seduced
[14] cover

CONTENTS. St. James concludes his Epistle with a variety of admonitions. He first exhorts his readers to patience; they are to exercise forbearance toward their oppressors and trust toward God, being comforted by the thought of the nearness of the advent of the Lord. Meanwhile they are to possess their hearts in patience; not to indulge in murmuring, discontent, and sinful censuring; but to take the prophets for examples of patient suffering; especially in the case of Job they had a remarkable example of extreme sufferings, and of a happy issue out of them. Next he cautions them against swearing; in their intercourse with one another, their simple word is to be sufficient. He then recommends to them prayer; whether they were in sorrow or in joy, they were to cultivate a devotional spirit; if in sickness, they were to send for the elders of the church, and to use those remedies which the Lord had prescribed; they were to exercise mutual confession and prayer that they might be restored; and as an instance of the efficacy of earnest prayer, he adverts to Elijah, who by prayer opened and shut the floodgates of heaven. He then concludes, and sums up his Epistle with an exhortation to aim at the conversion of the erring, holding out to them the unspeakable blessing which results from converting a sinner from the error of his ways.

Ver. 7. The connection with the preceding paragraph is obvious and direct. St. James, having pronounced the doom of the rich oppressors, now proceeds to comfort the oppressed.—**Be patient**: literally, 'Be long-suffering;' an exhortation both to forbearance toward their oppressors, and to a trustful waiting on God for deliverance. Their patience must not be short-lived, but enduring.—**therefore**: an inference from what precedes; seeing that there is a day of vengeance when the unbelieving and ungodly rich will be punished for their injustice, luxury, and oppression, and consequently a day of deliverance to them.—**brethren**. St. James having, in the spirit of an Old Testament prophet, apostrophized the ungodly rich who were outside the Church, now returns to his readers, the Jewish Christians, his brethren both in the flesh and in the spirit — **unto the coming of the Lord**: until this period continue to exercise long-suffering. What is wrong will then be redressed; what is evil will then be removed. The night may be dark and lonely; but the longest night comes to a close. By the Lord here is meant Christ, according to the analogy of Scripture, and the general expectation of the coming of Christ by believers (2 Thess. ii. 1, 2). Though St. James applies the title 'Lord' chiefly to God, yet he had previously applied it to Christ (Jas. ii. 1). Two different meanings have been attached to the phrase 'coming of the Lord.' Some understand by it the coming of Christ in spirit to destroy Jerusalem, when the Romans were employed as the instruments of His vengeance upon the unbelieving Jews, and to which reference is made in the previous verses. Others, with greater probability, understand by it His coming in person to judge the world, or what is usually termed the second advent. How far the sacred writers distinguished between the destruction of Jerusalem and the future judgment—the type and the antitype—we have no means of ascertaining. St. James, according to his usual custom, illustrates the necessity of patience by an example taken from natural life, that of the husbandman waiting for the harvest.—**Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.** The early and latter rain are often mentioned in the Old Testament as essential for the production of the harvest: 'I will give you the rain in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil' (Deut. xi. 14). The early rain was the autumnal showers, which fell from the middle of October to the end of November, and prepared the ground for the seed. The latter rain was the spring showers, which fell in March and April, and were necessary for the ripening of the crops.

Ver. 8. **Be ye also patient**: as well as the husbandman; in this imitate his example.—

stablish your hearts: possess your souls in patience; 'be ye stedfast and immoveable.' 'Not the weak, but the strong hearts are qualified to cherish patience' (Huther). We need strength of mind to be patient; endurance is an evidence of strength.—**for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh**: the Lord is near; His coming to execute vengeance on your oppressors, and to reward your patience, is close at hand. 'Lest any,' observes Calvin, 'should object, and say that the time of deliverance was too long delayed, he obviates this objection, and says, The Lord was at hand, or, which is the same thing, The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' Here, also, two different interpretations are given: some referring this phrase to Christ's coming in spirit to destroy Jerusalem, and which was close at hand; and others referring it to His coming to judge the world—to the second advent, properly so called. We give the preference to this latter view, as the natural meaning of the words. But, it is asked, how can St. James say that Christ's second coming draweth nigh? Some solve the difficulty by saying that it was so in the sight of God, with whom 'one day is as a thousand years,' and that faith enabled believers to see things as God saw them. But St. James mentions this coming for the comfort of the oppressed, and therefore he must allude to a coming in their estimation near at hand. Others refer it to the then general expectation of the Lord's advent. Believers were then taught to live in constant expectation of the coming of the Lord. This event was indeed shrouded in uncertainty, and our Lord refused to give any revelation as to its time (Acts i. 7); but it was not by the primitive Church regarded, as it is by us, as far removed into the distant future, and as wholly improbable to happen in their days, but as an occurrence which might any time take place—even before that generation had passed away. 'The longing of the apostolic Church "hasted unto" the coming of the Lord. All Christian time appeared only as the point of transition to the eternal, and thus as something passing quickly away' (Neander). Hence the exhortations of the sacred writers: 'Let your moderation,' says St. Paul, 'be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand' (Phil. iv. 5). 'The end of all things,' says St. Peter, 'is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer' (1 Pet. iv. 7).

Ver. 9. **Grudge not.** The Greek verb means to sigh or groan; it is here rendered 'grudge,' because that word in Old English signified to murmur or repine. Hence 'murmur not;' be not impatient. This refers not so much to the feeling of envy—'be not envious to each other'—as to impatience and irritability of temper, which are often the effects of severe or protracted trials. It requires great grace to avoid all murmuring and petulance in suffering; especially it is a difficult attainment calmly to endure great pain; but God giveth more grace.—**one against another, brethren**—murmuring gives rise to mutual recrimination.—**lest ye be condemned**, or judged. Their murmuring against their brethren led them to find fault with them, and thus to accuse them falsely; and this exposed them to the righteous judgment of God, who is the Avenger of all those who are wrongly condemned. There is here one of those manifest references in this Epistle to the Sermon on the Mount (see Introduction). The sentiment is precisely similar to the maxim of our Lord: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged' (Matt. vii. 1).—**Behold, the Judge standeth before the door.** The near approach of the great unerring Judge should cause us to suspend our judgments. This phrase is evidently equivalent to 'The coming of the Lord draweth nigh,' and therefore by the Judge we are to understand Christ. Christ is at hand; He is even at the door, ready to render to every man according to his works. 'Before the door,' denoting the nearness of the advent. Compare Matt. xxiv. 33: 'Likewise, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door.' In a different sense, in the Book of Revelation, but still denoting nearness, Christ is represented as before the door: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock' (Rev. iii. 20). St. James had previously exhorted believers to patience in the endurance of trials by the consideration of this nearness of the advent; now he warns them by the same consideration against all murmuring and rash judgment of each other.

Ver. 10. **Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord**—namely, the Old Testament prophets, the inspired messengers of God.—**for an example.** It is an argument for patience in affliction that our sufferings are not peculiar, but that others have likewise suffered, especially those eminent for holiness.—**of suffering affliction**, or rather, simply 'of affliction.'—**and of patience**; not to be weakened, as if it were a Hebraism, 'for an example of patient affliction.' The prophets were examples both of affliction and of patience; their afflictions were greater than ours, and therefore the patience with which they endured them was so much the more commendable and worthy of imitation. Examples of affliction are not hard to find; we have only to open our eyes, and we shall see greater sufferers than ourselves; but examples both of affliction and of patience are rarer, yet, thank God, they also may be found. We can now take for examples not only the prophets of the Old Testament, but the saints of the New; and there are a sufficient number of such to console us in our sufferings, and to encourage us to a patient confidence in God.

Ver. 11. **Behold, we count.** St. James here speaks of this not as his own judgment, but as the judgment of all Christians, it may be of all right-thinking men.—**them happy which endure**: literally, 'blessed that endure;' that is not merely who are in a state of suffering, but who exercise patience in their sufferings, who endure unto the end. Such are blessed: God will not leave their patience unrewarded. Here we have another reference to the Sermon on the Mount; as the sufferings to which St. James primarily alludes arose from persecution: 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you' (Matt. v. 10, 12).—**Ye have heard of the patience of Job.** Job is here adduced as a special example; because he was the most remarkable instance both of affliction and of patience in the Old Testament. The patience of Job appears to have been a proverbial expression among the Jews; it is alluded to in the apocryphal book of Tobit (chap. ii. 12). No doubt Job was frequently guilty of impatient utterances; but this

is only a proof that the purest virtue is not free from blemish, and on the whole patience had with him its perfect work. This also teaches us that Job was a real person, and not a mere myth or fictitious character; for if so, an inspired writer could hardly have presented him to his readers as an example of patience. He is also mentioned in the Prophecies of Ezekiel along with Noah and Daniel (Ezek. xiv. 14), who were undoubtedly real persons.—**and have seen.** Some manuscripts read 'Behold, also.'—**the end of the Lord.** Some think that by the Lord here is meant Christ; and that by 'the end of the Lord' is meant His death, or the completion of His work. Christ, it is observed, the highest instance of patience, is here held out for our example. His death, founded on love and borne in patience, is the great fact which can encourage the suffering Christian to patience. But although this meaning is plausible, yet it is inadmissible, and not borne out by the context. The word here rendered 'end' is never in the New Testament applied to the death of Christ; and besides what St. James says was seen, namely, that 'the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy,' that is, that He compassionates us in our sufferings, is not the prominent lesson which Christ's death teaches us. The obvious and natural meaning of the passage, and that which is generally adopted, is to consider that by 'the end of the Lord' is meant the purpose which God had in view in Job's sufferings—the happy termination which He put to his afflictions; how the Lord restored him to more than his former prosperity (Job xlii. 2). The meaning of the passage then is: Consider not merely Job's affliction and patience, but his happy issue out of all his sufferings—the design which God had in view in these sufferings, and their result in Job's restoration.—**that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy**: the lesson to be learned from this example of Job. Let this proof of God's pity and mercy comfort and support you amid all your trials.

Ver. 12. Next follows a caution against swearing. There does not seem to be any connection between this caution and what precedes. St. James was perhaps led to it by the circumstances of his readers. **But above all things, my brethren**—as a caution of the highest importance—**swear not.** We have in the prohibition, and in the words in which it is expressed, a third manifest reference to the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 34–37). The Jews, as we learn from the Gospels, were very apt to indulge in swearing on trifling occasions; and it was doubtless the continuation of this evil habit among the converted Jews that was the occasion of this prohibition of St. James.—**neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath.** The words are precisely similar to those used by our Lord, only in a more condensed form: 'I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool' (Matt. v. 34, 35). It is a question, which has been often discussed, whether all oaths are here forbidden. On the one hand, the words appear sufficiently universal; but, on the other hand, there are scriptural declarations which seem to prove the lawfulness of oaths (Heb. vi. 16), and there are instances of oaths having been taken by the sacred writers themselves (2 Cor. i. 23). It has also been observed that swearing by God is neither here nor in our Lord's words forbidden; and that, on the contrary, this is in certain cases commanded in the Old Testament. 'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name' (Deut. vi. 13). It would appear that what St. James has here chiefly in view is the evil custom of swearing in common conversation; but he so expresses himself that oaths among Christians should be unnecessary—a simple affirmation or negation should be sufficient. At the same time, in some cases, as in courts of judicature, an oath is not only lawful, but may be expedient and needful (Heb. vi. 16).—**but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay**: be content with a simple assertion. Compare Matt. v. 37.—**lest ye fall into condemnation**: literally, lest ye fall under judgment.

Ver. 13. **Is any afflicted?** The word rendered 'afflicted' is a general term, denoting all kinds of affliction—sickness, pain, bereavement, disappointment, persecution. Here perhaps it specially refers to inward affliction—low spirits, in contrast to merry.—**let him pray**, prayer being the natural resort of the afflicted.—**is any merry?** that is, cheerful, in good spirits. It is the same word which St. Paul employs when he exhorts his fellow-voyagers to 'be of good cheer' (Acts xxvii. 36). It literally signifies to be of good mind; hence free from care.—**let him sing psalms**: literally, 'let him praise.' The primary meaning of the word is to touch, then to touch the strings of the harp, to praise. We are not to express our cheerfulness in riotous mirth, but in praise and gratitude to God. Nor ought prayer and praise to be separated; they should be combined; our prayers should often express themselves in praise, and our praise should be a prayer. Thus Paul and Silas in prison prayed and sang praises to God (Acts xvi. 25); literally, 'praying, they sang hymns to God;' their singing of hymns was their prayer.

Ver. 14. **Is any sick among you?** a particular instance of the general term 'afflicted;' to be taken in its literal sense, denoting 'bodily sickness,' and not to be spiritualized as denoting 'spiritual trouble.'—**let him call for the elders of the church**: not for the aged men, but for the presbyters of the church; that is, of the congregation to which the sick man belongs. This proves that even at the early period at which St. James wrote his Epistle there was a constituted ecclesiastical government; each congregation had its presbyters.—**and let them pray over him.** This may denote either literally 'over his bed,' or 'over him' by the imposition of hands; or figuratively 'with reference to him,' that is, 'for him.'—**anointing him with oil.** This anointing with oil was and still is much employed in the East as a medicinal remedy in the case of sickness, the oil used being chiefly olive oil. Thus in our Lord's parable, the good Samaritan is represented as pouring into the wounds of the traveller oil and wine (Luke x. 34). Here, however, the anointing with oil appears to have been a religious ceremony, and to have had a symbolical meaning; it was performed by the elders of the Church in the name of the Lord. We read that the disciples, whom our Lord sent endowed with the miraculous powers of healing, 'anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them' (Mark vi. 13).—**in the name of the Lord**; that is, of Christ, and to be connected with 'anointing.' The natural meaning is, that the presbyters were to anoint the sick by the authority or command of Christ. There is

certainly no mention of such an injunction, but our ignorance does not exclude the fact; and we have seen that the disciples sent out by our Lord anointed with oil. The name of Christ was the recognised vehicle for the communication of miraculous cures. Compare Acts iii. 6: 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Rise up and walk.'

Ver. 15. **And the prayer of faith.** Some understand by this, prayer uttered in faith—believing prayer—confidence in God as the Hearer of prayer. Others, supposing that the reference is to those miraculous gifts of healing with which the primitive Church was endowed, understand by faith what has been called miraculous faith—a belief that one was called upon to perform a miracle—a secret impulse from God to that effect. This faith was one of those extraordinary gifts which were conferred on the primitive Christians, but which are now withdrawn from the Christian Church. 'To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles' (1 Cor. xii. 8–10). It would appear from Scripture that this faith must be possessed by both parties; the person who performs the miracle must be endowed with this miraculous faith; and the person on whom the miracle is wrought must have faith to be healed (Acts xiv. 9).—**shall save the sick**: here, as is evident from the context, shall recover the sick man, restore him to bodily health. There is here no reference to the salvation of the soul. The Greek verb here rendered 'save' is often used in the New Testament of bodily healing. It is to be observed that the recovery of the sick is not attributed to the anointing with oil, but to the prayer of faith.—**and the Lord**, that is, Christ, in whose name he is anointed, **shall raise him up**, bring him out of his sickness, raise him from his bed.—**and if**: some render the words 'even if;' but our verson is admissible, and to be preferred as simpler.—**he have committed sins**—the sins being here regarded as the cause of his sickness. Even in the present day sickness is often occasioned by sin; but this appears to have been particularly the case in the apostolic age. Then it would appear that sickness was inflicted by God in the way of extraordinary punishment for sin. Thus it is said concerning those who profaned the Lord's Supper among the Corinthians: 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep' (1 Cor. xi. 30). Compare also John v. 14.—**they shall be forgiven him**: the removal of the sickness as the punishment of sin was a proof of its forgiveness. — Such is the exegesis of the passage; but very different interpretations have been attached to it. Of these there are three which merit consideration. The first is the opinion of the Romanists. It is from this passage chiefly that they derive their sacrament of extreme unction. The anointing with oil has a sacramental efficacy, like the sprinkling of water in baptism, or the participation of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. When a man is on the point of death he is to send for the priest, who, after hearing his confession, is to administer the communion to him, and to anoint certain portions of his body with the holy chrism in the name of the Lord, so that his sins may be forgiven him. But there is in this practice a manifest perversion of the words of the apostle. The anointing which St. James recommends has reference not so much to spiritual as to bodily healing. It was administered with the view of recovery from sickness, not, as is the practice of the Romanists, administered when, humanly speaking, all hope of recovery is gone. — A second view is to consider the anointing with oil as a mere medicinal remedy. It was generally so used throughout the East. It was enjoined to be administered in the name of the Lord, because the Divine blessing was to be implored on all occasions; and there was good hope for restoration to health resulting from the use of proper remedies, and given in answer to believing prayer. But the great objection to this view is that it is contrary to the spirit of the passage. The whole description certainly leaves the impression that this anointing was a religious service, and that the recovery of the sick was not the result of natural means, but a supernatural effect resulting from the prayer of faith. If the anointing were a mere medicinal remedy, it would have been performed by the physician rather than by the elders of the church.—We therefore give the preference to the third view, which considers that we have here a reference to the miraculous gift of healing practised in the primitive Church. We learn from the First Epistle to the Corinthians that this gift of healing was conferred by the Spirit upon many of the early Christians (1 Cor. xii. 9); and from the practice of the disciples of Christ, that they combined the anointing of oil with the exercise of this gift (Mark vi. 13). Hence, then, we give the following meaning to the passage:—That the elders of the church being sent for anointed the sick man with oil in the name of Christ, and by the prayer of faith miraculously restored him to health. Oil was employed as an external symbol, in a similar manner as our Lord in His miracles sometimes made use of external signs (Mark vii. 33; John ix. 6). It had a sacred import among the Jews, being the emblem of consecration, and perhaps was here employed to denote that the person cured was consecrated to the Lord. Of course this miraculous gift of healing was not a permanent power to be exercised on all occasions, otherwise there would have been neither sickness nor death in the primitive Church; but it was conditioned by the will of God. Paul undoubtedly possessed and exercised the gift of healing; but still he had to leave Trophimus at Miletum sick, and he could not cure himself of the thorn in his flesh. In the performance of a miracle, then, there was a peculiar impulse of the Spirit. The great objection to the above view is that the sick man was enjoined to call not for those possessed with the gift of healing, but for the presbyters of the church. It is, however, highly probable that those would be selected as presbyters who were the most highly endowed with miraculous gifts.

Ver. 16. **Confess your faults.** Here we are led especially to think on wrongs inflicted upon others—offences against the law of love; but there is no reason to limit the term to any kind of sins; it comprehends sins against God as well as against man.—**one to another.** On this verse chiefly do the Romanists found their doctrine of auricular confession, that it is the duty of believers to confess their sins to the priest. But for this dogma there is not the slightest foundation in this passage; the confession is to be made not to the priest, but to one another; it is a mutual confession, so that the

priest should confess to the penitent, as well as the penitent to the priest.—**and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.** Some restrict this to bodily healing, as in the case of the sickness mentioned above. But there is no reason for this restriction; as the confession and the prayer are mutual, spiritual healing may also be included. The term, therefore, is to be taken generally, including both spiritual and bodily healing. And certainly confession has a healing efficacy. There is no burden heavier to bear than the burden of some guilty secret. Now this burden is lessened, if not removed, by confession. Confession expels sin from the soul, and restores a man to his true self; whereas secrecy retains sin, and causes a man to live a false life.—**The effectual fervent prayer.** The Greek word here rendered 'effectual fervent' has been differently translated. Literally it means energetic or operative. Some, regarding it as passive, render it 'inwrought,' that is, by the Holy Spirit—'inspired prayer.' Others render it 'the prayer of a righteous man availeth much in its working;'[1] that is, worketh very effectually. Perhaps the word 'fervent' by itself, or 'earnest,' gives the correct meaning; the word 'effectual' in our version is wholly superfluous; the earnest prayer **of a righteous man availeth much.** Prayer, in order to prevail, must proceed from an earnest heart, and be made by a righteous man; that is, by a good, sincere, true-hearted man.

Ver. 17. **Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are.** An instance in the life of Elijah is given as an example of the efficacy of the earnest prayer of a righteous man. As, however, the readers might object that the example of Elijah was wholly inapplicable to ordinary men, owing to his peculiar greatness, St. James adds, 'subject to like passions as we are.' By this is not meant passionate, or liable to passion, but liable to the same human infirmities and sufferings, of the same nature as we. Compare Acts xiv. 15: 'We also are men of like passions with you.' 'We profit less,' observes Calvin, 'by the examples of the saints, because we imagine them to be half gods or heroes, who had peculiar intercourse with God; so that because they were heard, we have no confidence. In order to remove this heathen and profane superstition, James reminds us that the saints ought to be considered as having the infirmity of the flesh, so that we may learn to ascribe what they obtained from the Lord, not to their merits, but to the efficacy of prayer.'—**and he prayed earnestly**: literally, 'he prayed with prayer;' a Hebraism for 'he prayed earnestly.'—**that it might not rain.** There is no mention in the Old Testament of this being a prayer of Elijah; it is there given as a prophetic announcement (1 Kings xvii. 1); but it is a natural inference drawn from the character of Elijah.—**and it rained not on the earth**; that is, on Palestine and the adjoining regions.—**by the space of three years and six months.** The same period is stated by our Lord (Luke iv. 25). Whereas, in the Book of Kings, it is said that 'the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year,' namely, concerning the rain (1 Kings xviii. 1). But there is here no contradiction, as the third year refers to the time when Elijah repaired to the widow of Zarephath, which he did not do until the brook Chereth had dried up, and consequently some time after the famine had commenced. The period three years and six months is remarkable as being the same space of time during which the two witnesses prophesied who had power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy (Rev. xi. 6).

Ver. 18. **And he prayed again.** This, also, is not expressly mentioned in the Old Testament, but it is certainly implied. It is there said that 'Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees' (1 Kings xviii. 42); that is, placed himself in the attitude of prayer.—**and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.**

Ver. 19. We have in these two last verses the conclusion of the Epistle; and certainly the words form a summary of its nature, its contents, and its design. Its sole purpose was to correct the errors of the Jewish Christians, and to restore them to the truth of the Gospel.—**Brethren, if any of you do err,** literally, be seduced, **from the truth,** the truth of the Gospel, that word of truth by which they were begotten (Jas. i. 18). Here the reference is not to a single defection, but to an alienation of the heart from the truth. The error includes false doctrine as well as false practice, although it is chiefly with the latter that this Epistle is concerned.—**and one convert him**—is the instrument in the hand of God of his restoration.

Ver. 20. **Let him know,** as an inducement to attempt the work of restoring the erring, **that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way**—restores him to the truth—**shall save a soul from death.** Here, evidently, eternal death is meant, the punishment of the condemned, the death of the soul; a death compared with which the death of the body is but a trifle; thus intimating in the strongest manner the infinite importance of the restoration of the erring.—**and shall hide a multitude of sins**; that is, the sins not of the person who converts, but of the person who is converted; the multitude of his sins are blotted out; his actual sins, not the possible sins which the sinner might have committed, but of which his conversion has prevented the commission. The covering of sins is a common phrase for their remission. Thus David says: 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered' (Ps. xxxii. 1). And certainly to aim at the conversion of our fellow-men is a far more generous motive presented to us, than if the apostle had appealed to the personal good which such a work would confer upon ourselves in promoting our own holiness, or even to the glorious reward in a future life promised to those who have turned many unto righteousness (Dan. xii. 3).

[1] So Revised Version.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLES OF PETER.

THE First Epistle of Peter, like that of John, explains its own intention. The latter is declared to be written in order that its readers' 'joy may be full' (1 John i. 4), that they may know that they 'have eternal life,' and that they may 'believe on the name of the Son of God' (chap. v. 13). The former gives the key to its own design in these words: 'By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand' (chap. v. 12). Its object, therefore, is to assure its readers of the truth of that which they had received, and to encourage them to abide by it at all hazards. It was not to Peter himself that they owed their introduction to the kingdom of Christ. It is true that Jews from some of the regions addressed had been present at Pentecost, and may have heard Peter's discourse on that occasion (Acts ii.). But the churches mentioned in the inscription of this letter, were churches which stood indebted to Paul and his associates for their existence. The faith which they had received through this channel had now to be maintained in the face of trials arising from the threatenings or persecutions of the heathen world. It was essential that these scattered believers should see that the Christian vocation for which they might be called to suffer, was worth the suffering for, and that the grace which had been made known to them was the true grace of God. If there was no Paul to do this service for them, Peter was the man to take his place. Could not he set his seal upon his 'beloved brother's' teaching? Could not he testify as none other of the 'living hope,' and of the sureness of the things in which they had been instructed? He had confessed Christ. Upon that confession, and what it proved him capable of becoming, the Church itself was to be built. He had denied Christ, and knew by experience what manner of adversary these Christians had to cope with. As a witness of Christ, he can urge them to witness a good confession in evil times. As once threatened, he can speak to those who are now threatened. So in this letter he carries out the commission given him by Christ in reference to Satan's sifting of himself,—'when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren' (Luke xxii. 32). And the sum of his exhortations in it is an unfolding of the meaning of that simple, piercing question, at once reproof, expostulation, and counsel, and never to be forgotten when once heard, which his suffering Lord had spoken into his drowsy ear in the garden of Gethsemane,—'What, could ye not watch with me one hour?' (Matt xxvi. 40).

The voice of the Epistle, therefore, has been correctly recognised to be the voice of *animation*. It is not enough, however, to say of it that it is a letter of strength and confirmation. It is eminently one of *reminiscence*. It strengthens and confirms by putting in remembrance. It recalls the great facts of grace which had made these

believers what they are. It makes the warm colours of the doctrine in which they had been trained by Paul and their first teachers, revive again. The spiritual truths which they had once received, were the only things which could illumine the dark night of trial which was closing in about them. On these, as on so many tracks of heavenly light shot across the gloom, Peter concentrates their fading attention.

The Epistle was rightly described by Luther as one of the noblest in the New Testament. It is strange that its individuality and independence should have been denied, and that some should still speak of it as a compilation of other men's thoughts, a cento of other men's modes of expression. It is true that there are unmistakeable resemblances between it and others of the New Testament Epistles. There are some decided points of conjunction, for example, between it and the Epistle of James. These are so remarkable, indeed, that some regard Peter as reiterating James's teaching, and preparing the way for Paul's. Both James and Peter have a peculiar term for *trial;* both speak of the *manifold* temptations; both introduce the grass as a figure of human glory; both cite or echo the same passage from Proverbs; both adopt similar forms of exhortation (cf. Jas. i. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 1). There are things again which this Epistle has in common with the First Epistle of John. Both speak, for example, of Christ as 'the righteous,' of believers being *begotten* or *born again*, *purifying* themselves, etc. Above all, there are striking similarities between Peter and Paul, in the use made of the Old Testament, in the counsels on the subject of the relative duties, in the doctrine of civil and political obligation, and in other matters. These are of a kind to indicate that Peter must have written with familiar knowledge of much that Paul had written before him. They make it difficult not to suppose that he had the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians in particular before him or in his mind. They have induced some, indeed, to suppose that his First Epistle was purposely constructed to some extent, as regards the introductory greeting and the exhortations to various orders of society, on the plan of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

But there is nothing wonderful in such resemblances. As the Book of Acts shows, Peter must have been well acquainted with the views and methods of statement characteristic of James. John and Peter, again, were usually together, as long as that was possible. They were to each other what Mary and Martha were to one another. And as to Paul, his system of teaching was certainly not unknown to Peter. Paul is careful to tell us himself how he laid it before the Apostles (Gal. ii. 2). Nor do these apparent repetitions take from the distinct character of the Epistle. They are affinities, not borrowings. Peter puts all in a form of his own. Even when he most reminds us of Paul, he has an independent method of expression. The Pauline formula *live to God* becomes in Peter *live to righteousness*. The Pauline idea of *dying to sin* receives in Peter a notably different phraseology.

The individuality of the Epistle appears in many things. Not a few of its conceptions and terms are peculiar to Peter. Among these may be named the 'kiss of charity' (chap. v. 14), the 'conscience toward God' (chap. ii. 19), the 'living hope,' and the whole description of the inheritance (chap. i. 3, 4), the declaration that baptism is 'the answer of a good conscience toward God' (chap. iii. 21), the phrase 'gone into heaven' applied to Christ (chap. iii. 22), the sections on the preaching to the spirits in prison (chap. iii. 19, 20), and the gospel preached to them that are dead (chap. iv. 6), etc. He has his own modes of expounding the doctrines of Christianity, and of illustrating the Christian life. Thus it has been noticed that *good works*, which appear in John as the fruits of love, in James as the substance of the Christian life, and in Paul as the results of faith, are in Peter rather the 'tests of the soundness and stability of a faith which rests on the resurrection of Christ and looks to the future'

(Cook). He has his own way of looking at the Person and Work of Christ. It has been rightly observed that the prominent thing with him is the mediatorial position of his Lord, and that this is made to turn upon His resurrection. He presents this in great breadth. Christ is the medium of our regeneration (chap. i. 3), of our belief in God (chap. i. 21), of acceptable sacrifice (chap. ii. 5), of baptism (chap. iii. 21), of the glorifying of God (chap. iv. 11); and it is through His resurrection that we are begotten again to a lively hope (chap. i. 3), and that we come to have faith and hope in God (chap. i. 21). There is a remarkable fondness for dwelling on the character of Christ, and bringing out the power of His example. He is our Pattern in suffering, in respect at once of the unmerited nature of His sufferings and of His sinlessness and patience in enduring them. The Christ, too, with whom Peter connects the great deeds of grace is all the while not so much the Christ of history as the Christ of glory, in the might of His ascension, exaltation, sitting at God's right hand, headship over the Church and all angels, and Second Coming.

The Epistle is distinguished, too, by its comparatively non-systematic form. It is less dialectical by far than any of the greater Pauline Epistles. It is not without its plan. But its unity is not a reasoned unity. The logical particles, which abound in Paul's writings, are rare in Peter. Here the method is simply to let the one sentence suggest the next. There is the habit, too, of insisting on the same truths in repeated forms. Thus the trial of faith like gold tried with fire (chap. i. 7) reappears in the 'fiery trial' of chap. iv. 12; the 'be sober' of chap. i. 13 rings out again in the 'be ye therefore sober' of chap. iv. 7, and the 'be sober,' etc., of chap. v. 8; the injunction not to fashion themselves 'according to the former lusts in their ignorance' (chap. i. 14) is repeated in chap. ii. 11 as a charge to 'abstain from fleshly lusts,' and in chap. iv. 2 as a warning not to 'live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men;' the idea of the well-doing of the Christian as the best argument for silencing the slanderous Gentile (chap. ii. 15), meets us again in the conversation of the wives which wins over the husbands (chap. iii. 1), and in the good conversation in Christ which puts to shame the false accusers (chap. iii. 16); the thankworthiness of suffering wrongfully (chap. ii. 19) rises again in the happiness of suffering for righteousness' sake (chap. iii. 14), and in the blessedness of being reproached for the name of Christ (chap. iv. 14).

The Epistle is further marked by a perpetual movement among Old Testament ideas, imagery, and language. It represents the Church of Christ as the Church of Israel perfected and spiritualized. The language of Leviticus is introduced when the call of God is stated (chap. i. 15, 16). The Messianic terms of Isa. xxviii. and Ps. cxviii. are naturally adopted in describing Christ's position (chap. ii. 6, etc.). The great section on the Servant of Jehovah (Isa. lii. 13–liii. 12) has many of its features reproduced here. And all this without the exclusiveness of the old Jewish spirit. It is characteristic of the Epistle, also, to carry practice back to Christian fact and Christian doctrine, and to show that the roots of the former lie in the latter. So it is that it conjoins the 'exhorting' with the 'testifying' (chap. v. 12). And in relation to this, it deals for the most part with *objective* truth. It has its pointed warnings against the lusts of the flesh. But we find little in it like the Pauline representations of the struggle between two kingdoms in the soul, or the profound experiences of a competition between the evil that the man would not and yet does, and the good which he would and yet does not. Still less do we see of anything like a conflict between intellect and faith. And almost as little of the deep intuition of John. What Peter dwells on is not the subjective but the objective, not the mysteries of the work of grace within us, but the gifts which grace brings to us, and the obligations it

lays us under. It is the acts of God that he sets forth,—His foreordaining of Christ, His calling a people, His raising Christ from the dead, etc. And with all this the attitude of the Epistle is distinctively prospective. It lives in the future. What has arrested the attention of most expositors is the fact that its face is turned so steadily to the future. Everything is seen in the light of the end. The 'appearing' of Jesus Christ fills the view. The present life of the believer recedes into the background, or is read in terms of what it shall be when Christ returns. *Glory* and *honour* are the keynotes of the Epistle. It regards *salvation* itself as something 'ready to be revealed in the last time' (chap. i. 5), and as the *end* of faith (chap. i. 9). It is engaged with the contents of Christian hope, where Paul might occupy himself with the gladness of the present life of justification, or with the seriousness of the present struggle between grace and nature in the individual. 'In this Epistle,' says Wordsworth, 'Peter views all the *sufferings* of Calvary as *glorified* by triumph. He sees Christ's decease, he sees his own decease, he sees the decease of all Christ's faithful followers, as invested with a heavenly radiance by the light of the Transfiguration. He writes his Epistle in the joyful light of that prophetic Vision of Glory.'

Authorship of the First Epistle.

There are not a few things in the Epistle which become all the more natural and intelligible if it was written by Peter the Apostle. There are various points of affinity between it and the discourses of Peter which are recorded in the Book of Acts. These are of a kind to suggest an argument in favour of the Petrine authorship from undesigned coincidences. There is a habit of immediate personal appeal. There is an abundant use of direct terms of address, such as 'to you,' 'for you,' etc., which sharpen general statements into distinct personal applications to the readers. This is seen in passages like chaps. i. 4, 20, 25, ii. 7, iii. 6, etc. There is also the habit of repeating Christ's own words, or of using expressions which show that these were in the writer's mind, as in chap. iii. 9, 14, etc. And at several points, in a simple and unstudied style, the Epistle gives a singular reflection of Peter's personal history. It contains much that is quite in character, if Peter is the author. And external testimony is almost entirely in this direction. It is not quoted, indeed, in the Muratorian Canon, a document of high antiquity and great importance. But it is referred to by Second Peter. There are echoes of it, allusions to it, or citations from it in many of the oldest remains of Christian literature. It is given in the older Syriac Version, in which only three Catholic epistles appear. It is reckoned among the accepted books by Eusebius, in his classification of the New Testament writings. Its Petrine authorship has been contested by some critics in modern times mainly on subjective grounds. It is contested by some still. But it has been generally recognised as among the most richly and securely attested of all the books of the New Testament. The Church has accepted it from the earliest times for what it professes to be, and has regarded it as of eminent interest and worth.

The Parties addressed—Date and Place of Composition.

There has been great division of opinion as to the parties to whom the Epistle was written. The question is one of great difficulty. If the terms with which the letter opens were alone in view, we should conclude probably in favour of the view that the persons addressed were Jewish Christians. For it would be most natural to take the phrase 'strangers scattered abroad' in the literal sense of *sojourners of the*

Jewish dispersion (see note on chap. i. 1), all the more that it is connected with plain territorial designations. And this view has secured the consent of a large number of eminent expositors. On the other hand, the localities mentioned are localities tra versed, as we gather from Acts and the Pauline Epistles, for the most part by Paul. The churches in these localities were churches planted mainly by Paul, and predominantly Gentile in character. And throughout the Epistle statements appear (*e.g.* in chaps. i. 14, 18, ii. 9, 10, iii. 6, iv. 3) which only a very strained exegesis seems capable of suiting to Jews. Hence it has been held by a still larger number of interpreters and historians of the first rank that the churches addressed consisted mainly of Gentile Christians. This view has been adopted in the present Commentary as on the whole the more probable. An intermediate solution has been sought in the idea that the parties were chiefly those who had been proselytes to Judaism before they became Christians. But that has met with little favour.

The date of the Epistle has been brought down by some as late as the period of Trajan's persecution. But if the Epistle is by Peter, the persecution in view, as now in action, or as casting its shadow over them, must be the Neronic. Some suppose it to have been written at the beginning of Paul's third missionary journey; others, at the end of that; others, during the latter part of Paul's captivity; others, immediately after Paul's release from his two years' imprisonment at Rome. The most probable opinion on the whole, however, is that it was written after Paul's martyrdom, and towards the close of Peter's career, about the year 66 A.D.

The only direct indication which the Epistle gives of the place of its composition is in chap. v. 13; see note on which. We have seen reason to take the statement there made in the literal sense, and therefore to regard the Epistle as written, not from Rome, the mystical Babylon, but from the historical Babylon on the Euphrates.

N.B.—The English text is given according to the original form of the Authorised, as that is reproduced in the Parallel Edition of the Revised Version.

Problems of the Second Epistle.

The Second Epistle professes to be written by Peter. It refers to a former Epistle written by the same hand (chap. iii. 1.). It indicates acquaintance with the Epistles of Paul (chap. iii. 15, 16). We should infer from it that it was addressed to the same circle of readers as First Peter. And if it is Peter's composition, it would belong naturally to the very end of his life. It can be shown, too, that there is a not inconsiderable number of terms and peculiar turns of thought which are common to the two Epistles. There are at the same time great differences between them. There are marked differences of style. There are also differences of a broader kind. The exhortations of the Second Epistle, for example, are of a much more general order than those of the First. The details into which the one goes on the subject of social, political, and domestic duty, do not appear in the other. The peril against which the First Epistle aims at strengthening its readers is that arising from the slanders and persecutions of the surrounding heathenism. The peril which the Second Epistle looks to is that arising from corruption within the Church, the seductions of false teachers, etc. In respect of external testimony, too, this Epistle occupies a very different position from the First.

The question, therefore, into which all others affecting this Second Epistle run, is that of its authenticity. Its claim to be the composition of Peter the Apostle has been doubted or denied by a very large number of authorities, and these of widely different schools. The grounds on which these doubts or denials have proceeded

have been as various as the schools. Some of them are confined for the most part to the representatives of extreme parties. Others admittedly have weight with all. With some the main thing is the existence in the Epistle of matters which are taken to belong to the developed Gnosticism of the third century. Others lay great stress upon what is believed to be the dependence of Second Peter upon Jude. The similarities between these two Epistles are of a very striking kind. They are admitted even by some who affirm the canonicity and Petrine authorship of the present Epistle, to point very clearly to the priority of Jude. They are held by not a few to amount to borrowings, which are inconsistent with the supposition that the Apostle Peter could have been the writer. Others, who dispute the authenticity of Jude, hold them to be conclusive proof that Second Peter cannot be earlier than the second century. The singular style of the Epistle is also largely insisted on. It is affirmed that, both in phraseology and in theological conception, the difference between the two Epistles which bear Peter's name is too decided to make it reasonable to suppose them to have proceeded from the same hand. It has also been argued that the writer betrays himself by over-anxiety to make himself out to be Peter, and that there was a disposition in the early Church by all means to magnify Peter's position and forge his name. Quite recently, too, an elaborate argument has been constructed to prove the Epistle to be largely dependent on the writings of Josephus. (See Dr. Abbot's articles in the *Expositor*, second series, vol. iii.) The difficulties and peculiarities attaching to the external evidence have been felt by all.

On the other hand, the adverse arguments drawn from the contents and characteristics of the Epistle have been met with considerable force. It is certainly too much to assert the presence of formal Gnosticism in the Epistle. The attempted demonstration of Peter's borrowings from Josephus has been deprived of much of its power by a close examination of the facts (see especially an article by Dr. B. B. Warfield in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* for January 1882). If there are marked theological and linguistic differences between the two Petrine Epistles, they are balanced to a considerable extent by a series of equally striking similarities, both in doctrinal statement and in individuality of expression. We have instances of the former in the matter of prophecy (1 Pet. i. 10–12; 2 Pet. i. 19–21), in that of the new birth (1 Pet. i. 22, ii. 2; 2 Pet. i. 4), in that of submission to civil authority (1 Pet. ii. 13; 2 Pet. ii. 10), etc. We have instances of the latter in the use of such special terms as *virtue* (1 Pet. ii. 9; 2 Pet. i. 3), *multiplied* (1 Pet. i. 2; 2 Pet. i. 2), *conversation* (1 Pet. i. 15; 2 Pet. ii. 7), *supply* or *minister* (1 Pet. iv. 11; 2 Pet. i. 5, 11), *putting off* (1 Pet. iii. 21; 2 Pet. i. 14), *receiving* (1 Pet. i. 9; 2 Pet. ii. 13), etc. It is at the best only a limited value that can be safely allowed to these differences in style. One of the keenest of critics, now the veteran of his school, makes this confession:—'On the theological and linguistic differences between the two Epistles, which the later criticism has so emphasized, we lay no stress. The two Epistles are too short, have to do with wholly different circumstances; and especially there are no direct contradictions to be found. One of the Epistles is on other grounds proved to be ungenuine. Can this also be brought into account?' (Reuss.) As to the external testimony, it is certain that Origen, at the beginning of the third century, had the Epistle. He notices that there were doubts current about it. But his own use of it, and references to it, indicate that in his time it was generally received as a part of Scripture, and as Peter's composition. Clement of Alexandria, Origen's teacher, also appears to have possessed it, and even to have written a commentary on it. And although this is disputed by many, it is possible that we can trace it back to the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* early in the second century, to Barnabas about 106 A.D.,

and even to Clement of Rome about 97 A.D. The amount of early evidence is undoubtedly small. There are also the two serious facts, that it was doubted in the fourth century and earlier, and that it obtained no place in the canon of the Syrian Church. The doubts which took decided shape in the fourth century were gradually overcome, and the Epistle was recognised as canonical for many centuries. The question was revived at the Reformation period, and the weight of such names as Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin was lent to those who were uncertain of the Epistle's claims. In recent times these doubts have been urged with the utmost force, and have prevailed with very many. With the exception of the Syrian branch, the Church as a whole, however, has continued to give the Epistle a place in the canon. From the time of Eusebius, who ranked it with the disputed books, that place has been felt to be less certain than is the case with almost any other part of the New Testament. Yet the amount of external testimony might be shown to be even in this case far superior to that which is available for the masterpieces of Classical antiquity.

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF

PETER.

CHAPTER I.

CONTENTS.—I. Address and Salutation, vers. 1, 2; II. Ascription of Praise to God for the New Hope into which Believers are born, vers. 3–5; III. The Certainty and Nearness of the Salvation to which that Hope points helping to Joy in Time of Trial, vers. 6–9; IV. The Peculiar Interest of God's People of these Last Times in this Glorious Salvation, vers. 10–12; V. Exhortations to a Life in harmony with that Hope, and in particular to Holiness, vers. 13–16; VI. As also to Godly Fear, vers. 17–21; VII. And to Brotherly Love, vers. 22–25.

CHAPTER I. 1, 2.

Address and Salutation.

1 PETER, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the [a] strangers [b] scattered throughout Pontus,[1] Galatia, Cappadocia,
2 Asia, and Bithynia, [c] elect[2] according to the [d] foreknowledge of God the Father, through[3] [e] sanctification of the Spirit, unto [f] obedience and [g] sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: [h] Grace unto you, and [h] peace, be [i] multiplied.

[a] Gen. xxiii. 4; Ps. xxxix. 12; 1 Pet. ii. 11; Heb. xi. 13.
[b] Jo. vii. 35; Jas. i. 1; cf. 2 Mac. i. 27.
[c] Ch. ii. 6, 9; Mat xx. 16, xxii. 14, xxiv. 31; Mk. xiii. 20, 22, 27; Lu. xviii. 7; Rom. viii. 33; Col. iii. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 10; Tit. i. 1; Rev. xvii. 14.
[d] Acts ii. 23; cf. Rom. viii. 29.
[e] 2 Thes. ii. 13.
[f] 2 Cor. x. 5.
[g] Heb. xii. 24; cf. Heb. x. 23.
[h] Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 2; Gal. i. 3, etc.
[i] 2 Pet. i. 2; Jude 2.

[1] *rather*, to elect sojourners of the dispersion of Pontus, *etc.*
[2] *omit* elect *here*, *which belongs to* ver. 1
[3] *literally*, in

The writer opens with a greeting which is equally remarkable for its wealth of idea and for its admirable reflection of the combined gravity, tenderness, and animation of the body of the Epistle. In form it reminds us more of the Pauline type of inscription than is the case with any of the Catholic Epistles, excepting 2d Peter and Jude. It seems cast in the mould of Pauline doctrine, and adopts some of the familiar Pauline phrases. It has, at the same time, an unmistakeable character of its own. Like Paul, Peter refers at once to his apostleship. He dwells less on that, however, than on the standing of his readers. And the terms in which he describes them and their election are chosen so as to suggest thoughts of the believer's dignity and security. Thus with its immediate outset the letter begins to fulfil its high design of comforting and strengthening those tried and threatened Christians.

In ver. 1 we have designations of the author and the recipients of the Epistle. The former of these is given in utmost brevity; the latter, as the thing of superior interest, is carried on into the next verse and unfolded in the details of grace. Each of these designations has its peculiar point and intention. The description of the writer, **Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ**, is noticeable for its simplicity and reticence. For his personal identification he uses nothing beyond the new name, the name of grace, **Peter**, which his Lord had put

upon him (Matt. xvi. 8; John i. 42). He adopts the title **apostle of Jesus Christ**; and of all the Catholic Epistles, Peter's alone thus commend the writer to the readers' attention by putting forward his apostleship in the proëm. But he appends to this official title no further title, such as the 'servant' which Paul adds. Neither does he introduce any explanation of the way in which he came to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, such as is conveyed by the Pauline formula, 'by the will of God.' This latter would be superfluous in the case of one known to have been of the original twelve, one of the eye-witnesses chosen by Christ to be His 'messengers,' and commissioned by Him to go 'into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature' (Mark xvi. 15). The style of introduction differs, therefore, at once from Paul's and from that of James, John, and Jude, the writers of the other Catholic Epistles. This is not without its reason. Addressing churches with which he had no intimate connection, which were probably unknown to him, and which (as the localities show) were distinctively Pauline, Peter naturally appeals to his apostolic position in explanation of his writing them, as his warrant for taking the place of their founder, Paul, and in order to bespeak their attention. By limiting himself, however, to the one title, 'apostle,' he also indicates that his claims upon their regard were not personal, but those general, official claims which were common to him with others. It is somewhat different in the Second Epistle. There he can write as one who has come into closer terms of connection with his readers; hence there he prefaces the name of grace, Peter, by the old name of nature, Symeon or Simon, and adds to the official 'apostle' the wider title 'servant' (Schott). Here nothing personal to the individual Peter is allowed to come into view.—As this description of the writer implies the justification which exists on his own side for addressing these Christians, the designation next applied to his readers suggests circumstances on their side which make his call to communicate with them. They are **elect sojourners of the dispersion**—on which difficult expression, see also the Introduction. The term *elect* corresponds to an O. T. title of Jehovah's people (Isa. lxv. 9, 15, 22; Ps. cv. 43), and occurs in the N. T. in a variety of connections (Matt. xx. 16, xxii. 14; Luke xviii. 7; Rom. viii. 33; Mark xiii. 27; Rev. xvii. 14; 2 Tim. ii. 10; 1 Pet. ii. 9). It is not to be restricted to Jews or Jewish Christians, neither does it apply to the Church only, and not to the individual. Nor, again, does it necessarily refer to what passes in the Divine mind. Taken by itself it may express the gracious standing of those addressed, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether Church or individual, and that standing as the result of an act of God which had grasped them as they were in the world and brought them into a new relation with Him. It may refer to 'the selecting them out of the world and giving them to the fellowship of the people of God' (Leighton). It is therefore a note of comfort. If evil impended over the readers, they were at least chosen by God out of the world of heathen ignorance and hopelessness, and set by God's own act in a new position which made an abiding standing in grace. The second term, **strangers** or **sojourners**, is one used of those who are denizens of a place and not citizens; neither natives nor permanent inhabitants, but temporary residents in a land that is strange to them. It describes the readers as having their true city and centre elsewhere than where they were. It is a natural adjunct, therefore, to the term **elect**. If they were chosen by God's act out of the world, they cannot have their final home here. The third phrase, **of the dispersion**, is the familiar term descriptive of Jews outside the Holy Land, the whole body of Jews whose lot was cast among the heathen since the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations, remote from their own political and religious centre. In its literal sense here it would describe Peter's readers as belonging to, or having their residence among, the Israel that dwelt in the bosom of Asiatic heathenism. In its secondary application it may describe them as belonging to the community of the true dispersion under the N. T., the community of Christians who have to live scattered among the heathen. The parties in Peter's view, however, are more particularly defined as those of the dispersion settled within certain geographical limits, viz. those **of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia**. The localities are enumerated from north-east by west and south-east to west and north. This fits in well enough, therefore, with the position of one writing from the distant east, although it would not be safe to make much of that.—**Pontus**, the extensive territory stretching along the south coast of the Euxine, connected in classical lore with the story of the Amazons and the legend of the Argonauts in quest of the Golden Fleece, is memorable in ancient history for the brilliant reign of the great Mithridates, and in Christian history as the native country of Aquila (Acts xviii. 2).—**Galatia**, the country seized by the Gaulish invaders between B.C. 279 and 230, and reduced to a Roman province (apparently with the inclusion of Lycaonia, Isauria, the S.E. of Phrygia and part of Pisidia) by Augustus (B.C. 25), was occupied by a mixed population, mainly Gauls and Phrygians, but with considerable infusions of Greeks and Jews. It was visited twice by Paul (Acts xvi. 6; Gal. iv. 13), and also by Crescens (2 Tim. iv. 10).—**Cappadocia**, a rich pastoral district of Asia Minor, watered by the Halys, and notable in Church history for the three great Cappadocians, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Cæsarea, and Gregory of Nazianzus, became a Roman province on the death of Archelaus, its last king, A.D. 17.—**Asia**, here, as generally in the N. T., not Asia Minor, but Proconsular Asia, the territory including Mysia, Lydia, Caria, and most of Phrygia, and having for its metropolis the great city of Ephesus, which was the scene of a three years' ministry of Paul (Acts xx. 31), as well as of the preaching of Apollos (Acts xviii. 24). It embraced many churches known to us from Acts and the Pauline Epistles.—**Bithynia**, the fertile country stretching along the S.W. coast of the Euxine, bequeathed to the Romans B.C. 74, and constituted a proconsular province by Augustus, contained no churches known to us from Scripture. By the beginning of the second century, however, the Christian population must have been considerable. Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan (about A.D. 110) graphically describes the multitudes of converts, the deserted temples, and the unsaleable victims.—The list of territories shows that the churches addressed by Peter were for the most part, if not entirely, churches planted and cared for by Paul. It shows further that they were churches which did not occupy, in the cir-

cumstances of their formation, any peculiarly close relation to the mother church of Jerusalem. It also reveals the fact that there must have been a greater extent of evangelistic effort than we should gather from Acts. We know how the Gospel was carried into Galatia, namely, by Paul and Silas (Acts xvi. 6, xix. 10), and into Asia by Paul without Silas (Acts xviii. 23, xix. 1). But we know not how it was introduced into Pontus, Cappadocia, and Bithynia. Some suppose that Luke may have evangelized both Pontus and Bithynia from Troas (Acts xvi. 8). All that we learn from Acts is that there were men from Cappadocia and Pontus among the devout Jews who were at Jerusalem on the occasion of the Pentecostal descent (ii. 9), and that Paul had thought of going into Bithynia in the course of his second missionary journey, but 'the Spirit suffered them not' (xvi. 7).

Ver. 2. The following words are connected not with the title *apostle of Jesus Christ*, but with the designation *elect sojourners*. They are not a vindication of the writer's claim to be an apostle, such as Paul offers (1 Cor. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1, etc.), but a definition of the position of the readers. The definition is given with a detail which shows the security for their assured standing in grace to be nothing less than God Himself in the fulness of that Trinitarian relation wherein His love reveals itself. **According to the foreknowledge of God the Father.** Their election is in *virtue* of this, in *pursuance* of this (Alford), or has this for its *norm*. The term *foreknowledge* (which is never used of the lost) is distinct at once from allied terms expressing the idea of *predestinating* or *fore-ordaining* (Rom. viii. 29; 1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. i. 5, 11; Acts iv. 28), and from those expressing the *purpose*, *good pleasure*, or *counsel* of God. It is coupled with, but distinguished from, the latter by Peter in Acts ii. 23. It is more, however, than mere foresight. It is not the Divine prescience of the reception to be given to the decree of salvation, as distinguished from that decree itself. Neither does it imply that the Divine election or purpose of grace proceeds upon the ground of the Divine anticipation of character. It is knowledge, as distinguishable from decree. But as, both in the Old Testament (Ps. i. 6, xxxvi. 10, etc.) and in the New (John x. 14, 15; Gal. iv. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 19, etc.), the terms for *knowledge* occur with the intense sense of a cognisance which claims its objects as its own and deals with them as such, it is a recognition which, resting eternally on its objects, embraces them as its own and cares for them as such. It is a foreknowledge, therefore, which comes near the ideas of predestination and creative or appropriating love, and which makes it certain that its objects shall be in the relation which God purposes for them. In God Himself, as the New Testament teaches, is the cause of the election. The name *Father* here added to the word *God* implies further, that this relation of theirs to which God's foreknowledge looks is the expression of a new relation which He bears to them. As elect, therefore, they are the objects not only of a historical act of grace which took them out of the world of heathenism, but also of an eternal recognition of God, in virtue of which their election has its roots in the Divine Mind, and is assured not by any single act of God's love, but by a permanent relation of that love, namely, His Fatherhood.—**In sanctification of the Spirit.** This points to the means by which, or rather to the sphere within which, the election is made good. The term here used for *sanctification* is a peculiarly Pauline term, being found eight times in Paul's Epistles, and elsewhere only in Heb. xii. 14, and this one passage in Peter. It is also a distinctively scriptural and ecclesiastical term, there being no certain occurrence of it in heathen writers. It is generally, if not invariably, found with the neuter sense, not with the active (Rom. vi. 19, 22; 1 Cor. i. 30; 1 Tim. ii. 15; 1 Thess. iv. 3, 4, 7; Heb. xii. 14, 22; less certainly 2 Thess. ii. 13). Here, therefore, it expresses neither the act nor the process of sanctifying (Luther, Huther, and most), nor yet the ethical quality of holiness, but that state of separation or consecration into which God's Spirit brings God's elect. If their election has its ground and norm in the foreknowledge of the Father, it realizes itself now within the sphere or condition of a patent separation from the world, which is effected by the Spirit.—**Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.** These words mark the twofold end contemplated in their election. Some place the phrase *of Jesus Christ* under the regimen of the *obedience* as well as of the *sprinkling of the blood*. If it were possible to take the latter as a single idea, that connection would be intelligible. It might then be = unto the obedience and the blood-sprinkling, which are both effected in us by Jesus Christ. But as this is uncertain, while it is also awkward to attach two different senses to the same case in one clause (some making it obedience *to* Christ and sprinkling of the blood *of* Christ), it is best to take the *obedience* here independently. It will then have not the more limited sense of faith, but the larger sense in which the idea occurs again at ver. 14, in which Paul also uses it in Rom. vi. 16, and which is expressed more specifically in such phrases as *obedience to the faith* (Rom. i. 5), *the obedience of faith* (Rom. xvi. 26), *the obedience of Christ* (2 Cor. x. 5), *obeying the truth* (R. V. obedience to the truth, 1 Pet. i. 22). The second term is not one of those terms which are common to Peter and Paul. It is peculiar in the New Testament to Peter and the Epistle to the Hebrews. The noun occurs only here and in Heb. xii. 24, in which latter passage it is used in reference to the Sinaitic covenant. The verb occurs only in Hebrews (ix. 13, 19, 21, x. 22). It is to be explained neither by the Levitical purification of the Israelite who had become defiled by touching a dead body (for the sprinkling there was with water, Num. xix. 13), nor by the ceremonial of the paschal lamb, nor yet by that of the great Day of Atonement (for in these cases *objects* were sprinkled, not persons), but by the ratification of the covenant recorded in Ex. xxiv. As ancient Israel was introduced into a peculiar relation to God at Sinai, which was ratified by the sprinkling of the blood of a sacrifice upon the people themselves, so the New Testament Israel occupy a new relation to God through application of the virtue of Christ's death. And the election, which is rooted in the eternal purpose of God, works historically to this twofold goal—the subjective result of an attitude of filial obedience, and the objective result of a permanent covenant relation assured to its objects. Thus the note of comfort, struck at once in recalling the fact that the readers were elect, is prolonged by this statement of all that there is in the nature of that election to lift them above the disquietudes of time.—**Grace to you, and peace**

be multiplied. The greeting embraces the familiar Pauline terms, grace and peace, but differs from the Pauline form in the use of the peculiar term *multiplied*, which occurs again in 2 Pet. i. 2 and Jude 2, and in the salutations of no other New Testament Epistle. It is found, however, in the Greek version of Dan. iv. 1 (LXX., iii. 31) and vi. 25. If the Babylon, therefore, from which Peter writes can be taken to be the literal Babylon, it might be interesting to recall (as Wordsworth suggests) the Epistles, introduced by salutations so similar to Peter's, which were written from the same capital by two kings, Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, of two great dynasties, and addressed to all their provinces. The *grace* is the richer Christian rendering of the *hail!* or *greeting!* with which Greek letter-writers addressed their correspondents. The *peace* is the Christian adaptation of the solemn Hebrew salutation. Those great gifts of God's love which Peter knew his readers to possess already in part he wishes them to have in their affluence. It is also John's wish, following his Master's word (John xv. 11), that the joy of those to whom he wrote 'may be full' (1 John i. 4). As the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ have been just named, Peter omits mention of the sources whence these gifts come.

CHAPTER I. 3–5.

Ascription of Praise to God: specially for the Grace of Hope into which Believers are begotten.

3 [a] BLESSED *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
which [b] according to his [c] abundant [1] mercy hath [d] be-
gotten [2] us again unto a [e] lively [3] hope, by [4] the [f] resurrection of
4 Jesus Christ from the dead, to an [g] inheritance [h] incorruptible,
and [i] undefiled, and that [k] fadeth not away, [l] reserved in
5 heaven for you, who are [m] kept by the power of God [5] through
faith unto salvation, ready to be [n] revealed in the [o] last time.

[a] Eph. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 3. [b] Tit. iii. 5. [c] Eph. ii. 4. iii. 16; Phil. iv. 19. [d] Jas. i. 18. Cf. Jo. iii. 3, 5. [e] 1 Pet. i. 23, ii. 4, 5. [f] 1 Cor. xv. 20; 1 Thes. iv. 14. [g] Gal. iii. 18; Eph. i. 14; Col. iii. 24; Heb. ix. 15. [h] Rom. i. 23; 1 Cor. ix. 25, xv. 53, 54. [i] Jas. i. 27; Heb. vii. 26. [k] 1 Pet. v. 4. [l] Col. i. 5; 2 Tim. iv. 8. Cf. Jude 1; Jo. xvii. 11, 12, 15. [m] Phil. iv. 7. [n] Rom. viii. 18; 1 Cor. iii. 13; 1 Pet. v. 1. [o] Jo. vi. 39, xi. 24, xii. 48; 1 Jo. ii. 18, etc.

[1] *literally*, much mercy [2] begat [3] living
[4] through [5] *literally*, who in God's power are being guarded

Peter lifts his readers' eyes at once to the future. He speaks first of their hope, their inheritance, their final salvation, before he alludes to the burdens and fears of the present. There was that in Peter himself which leapt up in natural response to the new hope which came by the Gospel, and we can see from the Acts how he turned with constant expectancy to the future. If he seems, however, to give exceptional prominence to the element of hope, it is not as if he read the Gospel differently from Paul or John, or placed the grace of hope where they put that of faith, or that of love. The circumstances of his readers made it seasonable to present primarily to their view the worth and radiance of a grace which had at the same time so deep a hold upon himself.

Ver. 3. **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The gifts of God's grace to the believer, and the believer's relation to God, depend upon the prior relation between God and Christ. Hence it is as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and neither as the God of Israel, nor yet merely as our God and Father, that the Giver of all grace is praised. The term used here for *blessed*, or *praised*, which is so frequent also in the Old Testament, and in the New is applied only to God, occurs repeatedly as an affirmative—*e.g.* who *is* blessed (Rom. i. 25, ix. 5; 2 Cor. xi. 31). Standing here not in a relative clause, but at the opening of a section, it is rather an ascription, Blessed *be* the God, etc. It is another form of the same verb that is applied to Mary (Luke i. 28, 42). A totally different word is used in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.), where the idea expressed is that of *happiness* merely. It is possible that in this doxological outburst Peter is simply adapting to Christian use an old liturgical formula of the Jewish Church, or repeating one already familiar to the Christian Church (Weiss). The similarity of phrase, however, between Peter here and Paul in 2 Cor. i. 3, Eph. i. 3, is striking, and suggests to many that the former framed his ascription on the model of that of the latter. In Ephesians, as here, the doxology introduces an exhortation which reproduces its contents, although there the exhortation does not come to expression till chap. iv. 1, while here it follows almost immediately (i. 13).—**which according to his much mercy begat us again unto a living hope.** The particular grace for the bestowal of which God receives this ascription is *hope*. And that hope is described in respect at once of its origin and of its quality. It is due to God's regenerating grace. We have it only because He *begat* us *again*, a phrase used in the New Testament only by Peter, and by him only here

and in ver. 23, embodying, however, the same truth as is conveyed in somewhat different terms by Paul (Tit. iii. 5; Gal. vi. 15), James (i. 18), and John (1 John iii. 9, v. 1), and reflecting the Master's own instructions to Nicodemus (John iii. 3, etc.). It is to be taken, therefore, in the full sense of the new birth or begetting, and not to be diluted into the idea of rousing out of hopelessness. The direct past (*begat*, not *hath begotten*) is used, because the change from death to life in the individual is regarded as a definite, historical act, once for all accomplished, or perhaps because the regeneration of all is regarded as virtually effected in the historical act of Christ's resurrection. In the latter case Peter would be again in affinity with Paul, whose habit is to speak of all as dying in Christ's death and rising in Christ's resurrection (Rom. vii. 4; 2 Cor. v. 14, etc.). This historical act of regeneration had its motive or standard in God's *mercy*, His love being defined as mercy in reference to the natural misery of its objects, and that mercy being further described, in reference to what it had to meet and what it bestowed, as *much* or *great*. Compare the Pauline idea of God's riches (Eph. ii. 4; Phil. iv. 19). The hope which originated thus in God's act is *living*. With the birth comes the quality of life which distinguishes the believer's hope from all other hopes. These are at the best dim, uncertain longings, dead or dying surmises—

> 'Beads of morning
> Strung on slender blades of grass,
> Or a spider's web adorning
> In a strait and treacherous pass.'

'They die often before us and we live to bury them, and see our own folly and infelicity in trusting to them; but at the utmost they die with us when we die, and can accompany us no farther. But this hope answers expectation to the full, and much beyond it, and deceives no way but in that happy way of far exceeding it' (Leighton). Peter's fondness for these two ideas, the *hope* and the *living* (see the adjective again applied to the Word of God, i. 23, to Christ, and to believers, ii. 4), has been often noticed. It is for bringing us *into* a region of this kind that he here praises God. The '*unto*' here does not express the end or aim of God's act (= begat us in order that we might have a living hope), but has rather the simple local sense. When we come into the new life we come into a condition or atmosphere of hope, into a 'region bright with hope, a hope which, like the morning, spreads itself over earth and heaven' (Lillie). —**Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.** This admits of being connected immediately either with the *begat us again*—the idea then being that the regeneration takes effect only through Christ's resurrection—or with the preceding clause as a whole, in which case Christ's resurrection becomes the event by means of which we are brought by God's begetting into this new life of hope (so Calvin, Weiss, Huther, Alford, etc., substantially). Or, as the position of the adjective perhaps indicates, it may be connected with the term *living* (so Luther, Bengel, de Wette, Hofmann, etc.), the sense then being that the hope gets its quality of life through Christ's resurrection —because He lives it cannot but survive and assert itself as a living and enlivening principle.

Ver. 4. **Unto an inheritance.** Some connect this closely with the *hope*, as a definition of that to which it points—a living hope looking to the inheritance. Most connect it with the *begat*, the two clauses introduced by 'unto' being regarded as dependent on the same verb, and the latter clause defining the former more nearly. When we are begotten, that is to say, into the hope, we are begotten into the inheritance. To have the one is to have the other. So perfect is God's act, so secure against failure the hope which comes by that act. In relation to His begetting us, the future is as the present, the possession is as the expectation. The term *inheritance*, another characteristically Pauline term, and used by Peter only here (although in 1 Pet. iii. 9, v. 3, we have cognate words), is the familiar O. T. phrase for Israel's possession in the Land of Promise. It is used sometimes of Canaan as a whole, sometimes of the particular lots of the several tribes, and, with few exceptions, in the sense of a portion assigned. The idea of a portion coming by heirship to Israel has as little prominence as the idea of Israel as God's son. In the N. T. it occurs both in the sense of the portion assigned (Acts vii. 5; Heb. xi. 8) and in that of the inheritance proper (Matt. xxi. 38; Mark xii. 7, etc.). It is used, specially by Paul, to express the believer's possession in the future. But while Paul regards the believer as an heir because he is a son (Rom. viii. 17, etc.), he does not appear to connect the idea of possession by way of heirship with his use of the particular word *inheritance*, probably (so Huther) on account of the O. T. sense being so deeply impressed upon the term. He uses it, indeed, where the notion of heirship is inapplicable, *e.g.* of God's inheritance in the saints (Eph. i. 18). It is doubtful, therefore, whether Peter has in view an inheritance which comes in virtue of sonship, although the ruling idea of our being *begotten* favours that. He uses the word in the large sense, inclusive of all that the kingdom of God has in store for the believer in the consummation.—**incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.** This inheritance he describes first negatively and, as suits his character and style, by a number of adjectives, as *incorruptible*, subject to no dissolution or decay, *undefiled* (a term applied also to our High Priest, Heb. vii. 26), neither tainted nor tarnished, and *unfading* or unwithering (a word used only here, and in a slightly different form in v. 4). There is perhaps a climax in these negatives, from what has in itself no seeds of decay, to what is proof against external touch of pollution, and from that to what is superior even to the law of changing seasons and bloom succeeded by blight; or, as Leighton conceives it, the gradation may be from the perpetuity to the purity, and from that to the immutability of the inheritance. The sad realities of Israel's heritage in the Land of Promise may be in the background. It is too much, however, to find in these epithets (as *Weiss* does) allusions to the pollutions which defiled the land, or to the simoom which scorched it. The inheritance is further described positively (in terms much used by many of the Fathers as an argument against the Millenarian doctrine) as **reserved in heaven** (or, in the heavens) **for you.** The participle, which is in the perfect tense (*has been reserved*), points to the inheritance as one which has been prepared from the beginning, and the sphere within which it has been laid up in reserve is the *heavens*, where God Himself dwells. It is thereby made d ubly safe, 'laid up and kept,'

and that 'among God's own treasures, under His own eye, and within the shelter of His omnipotence' (Lilley), although it is yet a thing of the future. Thus is it secured, too, in the possession of the qualities ascribed to it; for into heaven nothing can intrude that corrupts, defiles, or makes to fade. Similar is our Lord's teaching on the *treasure* and the *reward in heaven* (Matt. vi. 20, xix. 21, v. 12), and Paul's conception of the hope which has been *laid up* or deposited in heaven (Col. i. 5). With finest feeling, too, for his readers, Peter puts this as all in reserve precisely for them. No longer using 'us,' as before, he now says '*for you*'—for you, sojourners in a land that is not your own, an inheritance is in waiting, which is strange to peril from the 'worm at the root of all our enjoyments here' (Leighton), from the foul hand that mars them, from the doom that makes nothing here abide 'of one stay.'

Ver. 5. **Who in God's power are being guarded through faith.** A still better reason why they should lift a thankfully confident eye to the heavenly inheritance. The possession might be reserved for them, and the reservation be to no purpose, if they themselves were left to the risks of earth and their own weakness. All the more insecure of it might they seem in their present circumstances of danger and temptation. But if the inheritance is kept for the people, the people are also kept for the inheritance. The word indicates a different kind of keeping from that expressed by the *reserved*. It is the military term used both literally (of the keeping of a city as with a garrison, 2 Cor. xi. 32) and figuratively (of the keeping of the heart, Phil. iv. 7, and of the keeping of the Israelite in ward under the law, Gal. iii. 23). The perfect tense used of the reserving of the inheritance (where a past act abiding in its effect was in view) changes now into the present, as only a continuous process of protection can make the people safe against themselves. The *efficient cause* (so Huther, Gerhard, etc.) of this sustained protection, or, as the preposition may be more strictly taken, the *sphere within* which it moves, the force behind which they are shielded as by a garrison, is nothing weaker than *God's power*,—a phrase to be understood here in the ordinary sense, and not as a title of the Holy Spirit (as Weiss, de Wette, etc., suppose on the false analogy of Luke i. 35). The *instrumental cause* of this protection, or the means through which the force works to guard us, is *faith*,—not to be taken in any limited sense (such, *e.g.*, as faith in the future, or a general reliance upon God, with Hofmann, Weiss, etc.), but in the specific Christian sense, the faith which grasps God's power, and which, while itself God's gift, is the subjective response to what is objectively offered. Thus, with the Lord Himself encompassing them as the 'mountains are round about Jerusalem,' and with the hand of faith clinging to the shelter of His power, the people on earth are secure as is the inheritance in heaven.—**unto salvation.** This is dependent neither upon the immediately preceding term *faith* (as if the secret of their security was a faith which had this salvation as its specific object), nor with the remote *begat us again* (so Calvin, Steiger, etc.; as if the *hope*, the *inheritance*, and the *salvation* were three co-ordinate states into which God's regenerating act brought us), but with the *guarded*, our salvation being the *object* which all this protection has in view. This great word *salvation*, so often upon Peter's lips, and occurring thrice within half-a-dozen verses here, seems used by him preferentially in the eschatological sense. Occasionally in the N. T. it has the simple sense of deliverance from enemies (Luke i. 71; Acts vii. 25), or preservation of life (Acts xxvii. 34; Heb. xi. 7), but it occurs for the most part as the technical term for spiritual salvation, or the Messianic salvation (John iv. 22; Acts iv. 12; Rom. xi. 11, etc.), now in the limited sense of the opposite of *perdition* (Phil. i. 28), and again in the general sense of eternal salvation; now in the sense of a present salvation (Phil. i. 19; 2 Cor. i. 6), again in that of a progressive salvation (1 Pet. ii. 2), and yet again in that of the completed salvation, which is to enter with Christ's return (Rom. xiii. 11; 1 Thess. v. 8, 9; Heb. ix. 28, etc.). Here it is the future salvation, and that not as mere exemption from the fate of the lost, but (as the underlying idea of the present distresses and fears of the readers indicates) in the widest sense, somewhat parallel to that of the *inheritance*, but with a more direct reference to the state of trial, of final relief from the world of evil, and completed possession of all Messianic blessing.—**ready to be revealed.** The expression points to the certainty of the advent of this salvation (in the term *ready*, stronger than the usual *about to be*, or *destined to be*, and indicating a state of waiting in preparedness), and perhaps also (in the tense of the verb) to the 'rapid completion of the act' of its revelation in contrast with the long process of the guarding of its subjects (*Alford*). The word *revealed* has here the familiar sense of bringing to light something already existent, but unknown or unseen.—**in the last time**: that is, the time closing the present order of things, and heralding Christ's return. The N. T. writers, following an O. T. conception, regard all history as having two great divisions, one covering the whole space prior to Messiah's times, the other including all from these times. The former period began to fade to its extinction with Messiah's First Advent. The second period would enter conclusively with Messiah's Second Advent. The former was known as 'this age,' to which, although Christ had once appeared, the apostle's own time was spoken of as belonging. The latter was called 'the *age to come*,' the final reality of which (although in principle it began with Messiah's first appearing) was as near as was Messiah's glorious return. This Second Advent, therefore, was the crisis once for all separating the two, and the time which marked the end of the one period and ushered in the other was 'the last day' (John vi. 39, and xi. 24, xii. 48), 'the last time,' etc. The salvation needs but the lifting of the veil at God's set time, and that time is on the wing. Christ's return will announce the close of the 'last time' of the old order, and in a moment uncover what God has prepared in secret. Peter does not measure the interval, or give a chronology of Messiah's comings. Yet if we compare this statement with others (iv. 5, 7) touching on Christ's return, we may say with Huther that 'his whole manner of expression indicated that in hope it floated before his vision as one near at hand.'

CHAPTER I. 6–9.

The Anticipation of this Future a help to Joy in Time of Trial.

6 WHEREIN ye [a] greatly rejoice, though now [b] for a season [1] (if [c] need be) ye are in [d] heaviness [2] through [3] [e] manifold
7 [f] temptations; that the [g] trial [4] of your faith, being much [5] more [h] precious than of [6] gold that [i] perisheth, though it be [k] tried [7] with [l] fire, might be [m] found unto [n] praise and honour
8 and glory [8] at the [o] appearing [9] of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; [p] in [10] whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet [q] believing, ye [r] rejoice [11] with joy [s] unspeakable, and [t] full of
9 glory: [12] [u] receiving the [v] end of your faith, *even* the [w] salvation of *your* [x] souls. [13]

[a] Mat. v. 12; Lu. i. 47, x. 21; Jo. v. 35, viii. 56; Acts ii. 26, xvi. 34; 1 Pet. i. 8, iv. 13; Rev. xix. 7.
[b] Mk. vi. 13; 1 Pet. v. 10; Rev. xvii. 10.
[c] Acts xix. 36.
[d] Mat. xiv. 9, xvii. 23, xviii. 31; Mk. x. 22; Jo. xxi. 17; Rom. xiv. 15; 2 Cor. ii. 2, 4, vii. 9.

[e] Mat. iv. 24; Mk. i. 34; Lu. iv. 40; 2 Tim. iii. 6; Tit. iii. 3; Heb. ii. 4, xiii. 9; Jas. i. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 10.
[f] 2 Pet. ii. 9; Jas. i. 2, 12; Mat. vi. 13; Lu. xxii. 28; Acts xx. 19; 1 Cor. x. 13; Heb. iii. 8; Rev. iii. 10, etc.
[g] Jas. i. 3. [h] Mat. xiii. 46, xxvi. 7; Jo. xii. 3. [i] Jo. vi. 2; Heb. i. 11; Jas. i. 11. [k] Lu. xiv. 19; Rom. xii. 2; 2 Cor. viii. 8, 22. xiii. 5; Gal. vi. 4; Eph. v 10; 1 Thes. ii. 4, v. 21; 1 Tim. iii. 10; Heb. iii. 9; 1 Jo. iv. 1; Job xxiii 10; Ps. lxvi. 10; Isa. xlviii. 10. [l] 1 Cor. iii. 13; Lu. xii. 49; Isa. lxvi. 15, 16; Zech xiii. 9, 10.
[m] Rom. vii. 10; 1 Cor. iv 2; 2 Cor. v. 3. [n] Rom. ii. 7, 10, 29. [o] 1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Thes. i. 7; 1 Pet. i. 13, iv. 13.
[p] Jo. i. 12, ii. 11, etc.; Acts x. 43; Rom. x. 14, etc. [q] See on ver. 6. [r] Only here; but cf. 2 Cor. xii. 5.
[s] Only here; but cf. 2 Cor. iii. 10; 2 Thes. iii. 2. [t] 2 Cor. v. 10; Eph. vi. 8; Col. iii. 25; 1 Pet. v. 4; 2 Pet. ii. 23.
[u] 1 Tim. i. 5. Cf. also Rom. vi. 22; Eccles. xii. 13. [v] Jas. i. 21, v. 20; Ps. lxxii. 13.

[1] *or*, for a little while
[2] *literally*, though now . . . pained (*or*, grieved)
[3] in
[4] *or*, proof
[5] *omit* being much
[6] *omit* of
[7] *or*, yet is proved
[8] *rather*, praise and glory and honour
[9] in the revelation
[10] *literally*, on
[11] *rather*, greatly rejoice (*as in* ver. 6)
[12] *literally*, glorified
[13] *rather, with a more striking abruptness*, salvation of souls (*omitting the words* '*even* the' *and* 'your'

Only now does Peter introduce the sufferings of his readers. Before naming these, he has made the bright realities of their privilege pass in rapid vision before their troubled eye. He has led them to look at the hope which is in them, and the future which is before them. And when he comes now to speak of the ills they had to face, he has more to say of their feelings than of their temptations. With quick and tender touch he handles their afflictions, softening their sharpness by disclosing their object. Wisely and with delicate skill he so shapes his statement as to bring the light of the future in upon the darkness of the present, and to make the burdens of the time an argument for joy. Leighton has caught correctly, if not completely, the intention of the paragraph, expressing it also with his own devout simplicity. 'The same motives,' he says, 'cannot beget contrary passions in the soul, therefore the apostle reduces the mixture of sorrowing and rejoicing that is usual in the heart of a Christian to the different causes of both, and shows which of the two hath the stronger cause, and therefore is always predominant. His scope is to stir up and strengthen spiritual joy in his afflicted brethren; and therefore, having set the matter of it before them in the preceding verses, he now applies it, and expressly opposes it to their distresses.'

Ver. 6. **Wherein ye greatly rejoice.** As the parallel in iv. 4 shows, the *wherein* may be taken to summarize the *ideas* previously expressed, whether in the immediately preceding sentence, or in the preceding paragraph as a whole. Some (Gerhard and Leighton) carry its reference, therefore, as far back as ver. 3, so that the connection becomes this, —'in all which blessings into which God begat you, ye rejoice.' Others (Calvin and Grotius, followed by de Wette, Schott, Fronmüller, etc.) refer it more particularly to the idea of vers. 4, 5,—'in which inheritance, hoped for and so secured, ye have the object of your joy.' In the present series of verses, however (although it is too much to say that this is his habit), Peter connects one section with another by carrying over the closing word or idea (compare vers. 5, 8, 10). It is more in harmony with this, therefore, to regard the *wherein* as referring to the immediate antecedent, viz. the 'last time.' In this case it may have the strictly temporal sense (so Wiesinger, Hofmann, Huther, Alford, etc.), the idea then being, 'in which last time, when it comes, you will have your time of rejoicing.' Or it may express the ground or object of joy,—'*at* which ye rejoice,' *i.e.* 'which last time is the object of your joy.' This last is to be preferred, as most consistent both with the tense of the verb and with the usage of the Hebrew term which the Greek verb here represents. This particular term for joy, aptly rendered 'greatly rejoice,' is one which occurs very rarely outside

the Septuagint, the N. T., and ecclesiastical literature. It is probably a Greek reproduction (see Buttmann's Greek Grammar by Thayer, p. 5) of a familiar Hebrew verb often used in the poetical and prophetical books (Ps. ii. 11, ix. 15; Job iii. 22; Isa. xlix. 13, lxv. 18, etc.). Like the Hebrew original (which means to 'leap for joy,' or 'rejoice to exultation'), it denotes a strong, a lively joy, intenser than is expressed by the ordinary term, with which also it is often coupled. Peter has in view, therefore, the kind of joy which is affirmed of Christ Himself (Luke x. 21), which He too expressly enjoins on persecuted disciples (Matt. v 12, where the stronger term is added to the weaker), and which breaks forth in the Magnificat (Luke i. 47).—**though for a little now, if need be, grieved in manifold temptations.** The 'temptations' (a term wide enough to cover anything by which character is put to the proof) will refer here, whatever else may be included, to the threatenings and slanders which, as we gather from the Epistle itself (ii. 12, 15, iii. 14–17, iv. 4, 12–19), these Christians had to endure from heathen neighbours. Their lot was cast *in* them. An adjective is attached to these temptations, which is used in the Classics, to describe the *many-coloured* leopard or peacock, the colour-changing Proteus, the richly-wrought robe or carpet, the changeful months, the intricate oracles. What a picture does this epithet 'manifold,' which is applied by Peter also to the grace of God (iv. 1), by James again to temptation (i. 2), and elsewhere to such things as the *divers diseases* healed by Christ (Matt. iv. 24), present of the number, the diversity, and the changefulness of these trials! Yet the terror of the fact is at once relieved by a double qualification, first by the words (each of which has here a temporal force), which limit these temptations to the present, and exhibit them as enduring only for a little space; and then by the clause 'if need be,' or 'if it must be so.' This latter (which has the strict hypothetical sense, and not some kind of affirmative sense, with Bengel, etc.; nor yet the subjective sense supposed by Schott, as if='if indeed there was reason why you should *feel* grieved in temptation') means that temptations come only where there is a call for them, and suggests that they may not, therefore, burden even the present continually. —The great difficulty in this verse is how to deal with the times indicated by the several terms, the 'rejoice' being in form a present tense, the 'grieved' a distinct past, and the word 'now,' with which the latter is connected, again pointing to present time. Some solve this difficulty (Augustine, Burton, etc.) by taking the 'rejoice' as an imperative. But Peter does not appear to begin exhortation till ver. 13, and the peculiar tense of the 'grieved' would thus be still unaccounted for. Others (Luther, Huther, Wiesinger, Alford, Hofmann, etc.) suppose that the present 'rejoice' has here the future sense, expressing the certainty of the joy which they are yet to have; and the peculiar tense of the other verb ('ye *were* grieved') is then explained as due to the writer speaking for the moment from the standpoint of the 'last time,' and looking back upon the troubles of his own time as then in the past. This is supported by the Syriac and the Clementine Vulgate, and is adopted by Tyndale. But, while the present occurs often enough as a quasi-future, that is the case with particular verbs (such as 'cometh') and in particular connections which naturally suggest the time, and which have no real parallel here. Others (Schott, *e.g.*) rightly retain the present sense in the 'rejoice,' but regard the 'grieved' as a sharp and definite past meant to exhibit the temptations of the believer's day as transitory, even momentary, in contrast with the deep permanence of his joy. This, however, is to ascribe a refinement of idea to the aorist which it does not express unaided. The explanation seems to be that the 'grieved' has the proleptic force here, which both the perfect (1 Cor. xiii. 1; Rom. iv. 14, xiv. 23; 2 Pet. ii. 10) and the aorist (John xv. 6; 1 Cor. vii. 28; Rev. x. 7) have in connection with conditional presents. In this case the natural sense of the several terms is preserved, and the meaning becomes simply this: 'ye *have* a present joy, notwithstanding that, if such proves needful, you *are* made the subjects of some short-lived trouble now.' The certainties of the future make the present a time of joy too deep to be more than dashed by the pain of manifold temptations.

Ver. 7. **that the proof of your faith,** etc. The statement now introduced connects itself closely with the conditional notice of suffering. It points them at once to the ultimate object of their possible subjection to many painful things now. If this subjection is only as God deems needful, it also looks to an end gracious enough to cast the light of comfort back into the dark and grievous present. In regard, however, both to the sense of particular words and to the mutual relations of the clauses, the verse is one of some difficulty. The term rendered 'trial' in the A. V. is found nowhere else in the N. T. except in Jas. i. 3. A cognate form, however, occurs more frequently, sometimes with a present reference and sometimes with a past (see *Cremer, sub voce*), so that it means both actively the process of putting to the proof (2 Cor. viii. 2), and passively the proof, the evidence itself (2 Cor. xiii. 3), or the attestation, the approvedness resulting from the process (Rom. v. 3, 4; 2 Cor. ii. 9, ix. 13; Phil. ii. 22). If the present term, therefore, were strictly parallel to that, it might mean either the *act* of testing, as many take it to be in Jas. i. 3; the *medium* of testing, as in the Classics (Plato, *e.g.*, using it of the touchstone), and at least once in the Sept. (Prov. xxvii. 21); or the *result* of testing. Of these three senses the first would be analogous to what is expressed by another cognate term in Heb. iii. 9. It is inapposite here, however, because the act or process of testing cannot well be the thing that is to be to their praise at the last. The second, which is adopted by Steinmeyer, etc., would make the *temptations* themselves, as the *criteria* of faith, the thing that shall be to their praise. The third, therefore, is the natural sense here, the *approvedness* (Huther) of your faith. The idea is thus much the same as your proved faith, your faith as attested by probation. Mr. Hort, however, holds that the term can mean nothing else than the *instrument* of trial, and supposes that an early confusion may have crept into the text between this word and a very similar form, the neuter of an adjective, meaning 'that which is approved,' which is supported by two of the better cursives. — **more precious as surely it is than gold which perisheth, and yet is tried by fire.** With the best editors the simple 'more precious' is to be read for the 'much more precious' of the A. V. Some make the clause dependent on the subse-

quent verb (so Steiger, de Wette, Huther, etc.). Thus it would form a part of the predicate, and the sense would be = that the approvedness of your faith may be found more precious than that of gold which perisheth and yet is tried by fire, unto your praise, etc. It is more consistent, however, with the position of the clause, the qualifying idea expressed by it, and the point of the comparison with *gold*, to take it as in apposition to the terms, 'the approvedness of your faith.' The 'of' inserted by the A. V. before 'gold' must be omitted. What the original sets over against the proof of faith, or the approved faith, is the gold itself, and not its proof. The particle translated 'though' by the A. V. means 'but,' or 'yet,' and expresses something which takes place *in spite* of something else. The participles rendered 'which perisheth' and 'is tried' are in the present tense, as denoting facts which hold good now and at any time, the sense being that it is of the nature of gold to perish, and it is the fact nevertheless that it is tested by fire. The comparison between the probation of character and the testing of metals, which occurs so often elsewhere (cf. Job xxiii. 10; Prov. xvii. 3, xxvii. 21; Ps. lxvi. 10; Zech. xiii. 9; Mal. iii. 2, 3; 1 Cor. iii. 13, etc.), has a limited application here. No direct comparison is instituted between the proving of faith and that of gold, nor between the worth of proved faith and the worth of proved gold. There is an indirect comparison between the perishable nature of gold and the opposite nature of faith, and the idea is that, if the former is proved by fire, although itself and the benefits of the process pass speedily away according to their kind, the latter, which, as tested, is seen to be a possession superior to the risks of decay and loss, and more precious than the most valued treasure, may well be subjected to similar action. The sentence, therefore, is introduced in order to remove the apparent strangeness, and to suggest the purifying intention, of the suffering which faith has to endure.—**might be found unto praise and honour and glory.** With the best editors (Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott, and Hort) the order runs rather **praise, and glory, and honour.** This is the only instance in the N. T. in which the three terms come together, although the conjunction of *honour* and *glory* is common enough (Rom. ii. 7, 10; 1 Tim. i. 17, etc.). Distinctions are drawn between the terms, and it is attempted to exhibit a climax in the order of the A. V., *e.g.*, from *judicial* approval to the *moral* esteem following on that, and then to the *reward* or form of glory (Schott, etc.); or from the *language* of praise to the *rank* of honour and the *feeling* of admiration (Mason); or from the commendation of the Judge to the personal dignity of the subject, and thence to his admission to the Lord's own glory. But the descriptions are cumulative rather than ascensive, word being added to word in order to convey some faint conception of the gracious reward which is to be *found* (a strong term indicating the open discovery of something, the proving of an object to be something after scrutiny) at last to have been the end in view.—**in the revelation of Jesus Christ**; that is, in the time of His unveiling, the time of His return, when the hidden Christ, the righteous judgment of God (Rom. ii. 5), and the sons of God (Rom. viii. 19), shall all appear finally as they are.

Ver. 8. **Whom having not seen, ye love.** With some good MSS. Scrivener reads *known* here instead of seen. The latter, however, is the better supported reading. The verse has a historical interest, being quoted (from the second clause onward) in the Epistle addressed to the Philippians (chap. i.) by Polycarp, the martyr bishop of Smyrna and the disciple of John, of whom also Irenæus (*Adv. Hær.* iii. 3), his own disciple, tells us that 'he was instructed by the apostles, and brought into connection with many who had seen Christ.' From the brief vision of the future honour of believers, Peter turns again to their present position, and to that as one with the springs of gladness in it. He takes up the joy already referred to (ver. 6), and, having indicated how the end of their trials should make the burdened present a life of joy, he next suggests how much there is to help them to the same in what they had in Christ now. In presenting the ascended Christ first as the object of love, he uses the term expressive of the kind of love which rises on the basis of a recognition of the dignity of the Person loved—a term which he had hesitated to adopt from the Risen Christ's lips in the scene by the Sea of Galilee (John xxi. 15–17).—**on whom, though for the present not seeing him, yet indeed believing.** The relative is connected not with the 'rejoice,' but with the 'believing.' It is as they believe on Him that they rejoice. The faith already noticed as the means through which they are 'kept' is reintroduced as a belief in the unseen Saviour which carries unspeakable joy in it. Neither the writer himself, who once had seen Christ in the flesh, nor the readers who had not had that privilege, could now see Him, of whom it is said that 'then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord' (John xx. 20). Yet they had Him as the object of their love and faith, and in that they had enough to make their clouded life bright. Their present might seem grievous in comparison with that future of which Peter had given them a glimpse. But if it denied them Christ in the possession of sight, it admitted the deeper possession of faith. And to have that is to have joy. For joy is the reflex of love and trust. So joy stands next to love in Paul's description of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22). So Peter, perhaps with the Lord's words to Thomas in his mind (John xx. 29), lets them into the secret of the blessedness of those who have not seen and yet have believed. 'It is commonly true, the eye is the ordinary door by which love enters into the soul, and it is true in this love; though it is denied to the eye of sense, yet you see it is ascribed to the eye of faith. . . . Faith, indeed, is distinguished from that vision that is in glory; but it is the vision of the kingdom of grace, it is the eye of the new creature, that quick-sighted eye, that pierces all the visible heavens, and sees above them' (Leighton). Faith and love are associated as working together for a gladness of heart which rises to exultation. Their gracious inherence in each other is indicated. 'There is an inseparable intermixture of love with belief,' says Leighton again, 'and a pious affection, receiving Divine truth; so that, in effect, as we distinguish them, they are mutually strengthened, the one by the other, and so, though it seem a circle, it is a Divine one, and falls not under the censure of the School's pedantry. If you ask, How shall I do to *love*? I answer, *Believe*. If you ask, How shall I *believe*? I answer, *Love*.'—

ye rejoice greatly (or, exult). The verb is taken here again (so Huther, Wiesinger, Hofmann, etc.) to be future in sense, though present in form. This chiefly on the ground that the adjectives descriptive of the joy are too strong for the experience of the present. But its association here with the strict presents 'ye love' and 'believing,' stamps the verb as a present in sense as well as in form. The point, therefore, is not merely that over against the tossings of the present and the disadvantage of an absent Lord, there is a glorious future in which they shall yet certainly rejoice, but that in Christ believed on, though not seen, they have now a joy deeper than time's storms can reach. The quality of this joy is expressed both by the repetition of the verb already used to express exultant joy (ver. 6), and by the addition of two remarkable adjectives. The former of these, which is found in no other passage of the N. T., and is of very rare occurrence elsewhere, conveys a different idea from the 'unspeakable' in 2 Cor. xii. 4, and is more analogous to the 'which cannot be uttered' of Rom. viii. 26. It means, 'too deep for expression,' and that in the sense of 'not capable of being told adequately out in words,' rather than in the sense of not capable of being fitted to language at all. The latter adjective means more than 'full of glory.' It designates the joy as one already irradiated with glory, superior to the poverty and inglorious-ness of earthly joy, flushed with the colours of the heaven of the future. Compare the proleptic 'glorified' of Rom. viii. 30, and better, the 'spirit of glory' in 1 Pet. iv. 14.—**receiving the end of your faith, salvation of souls.** If the 'rejoice' is taken as a quasi-future, the participle must now be rendered, '*receiving as ye then shall.*' As a strict present, which it rather is, it may express the time of the 'rejoicing' as coincident with the time of the 'receiving,' or (so Huther, etc.) it may introduce the latter as a reason for the former: ye can cherish this joy now inasmuch as ye are now receiving the end of your faith. This term 'receiving' occurs not unfrequently of judicial reward, specially that of the last day (1 Pet. v. 4; 2 Pet. ii. 13; 2 Cor. v. 10; Eph. vi. 8; Col. iii. 25). It may denote the getting of wages, the securing of a reward, the carrying off of a trophy, etc., and is used also in the more general sense of obtaining (Heb. x. 36, xi. 39). The word 'end,' again, means *goal*, that which faith has in view, or in which it is to issue. The idea, therefore, is more than that of securing reward. It is rather that they are even now in the process of reaching the goal of their faith, in the way to make finally their own that to which their faith looks, and therefore they may well find deep and constant joy even in the broken present. The mark which their faith is meant to reach is described as a salvation of *souls*, not because salvation is a *spiritual* thing, nor because it is the *soul* that is the chief subject of salvation, and the *body* only a future participant (so Bengel), nor because there is anything like a trichotomy or triple division of human nature in view (Brown, etc.), but simply because in the flexible psychology of the N. T. the term *soul* denotes the living self (cf. iii. 20; Jas. i. 21, v. 20).

CHAPTER I. 10–12.

The Peculiar Interest of God's People of these Last Times in this Glorious Salvation.

10 OF[1] which salvation the prophets have [a]enquired and [b]searched diligently,[2] who prophesied of the grace *that*
11 *should come* [c]unto you:[3] [d]searching [e]what, or what manner of [f]time,[4] the [g]Spirit of Christ which [h]was in them did [i]signify,[6] when it testified[7] [j]beforehand the [k]sufferings of[8] Christ, and
12 the [l]glory[9] that should follow.[10] Unto whom it was [m]revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us,[11] they did [n]minister[12] the things which are[13] now [o]reported unto you by[14] them that have[15] [p]preached the gospel unto you with the [q]Holy Ghost sent down[16] from heaven; which things the[17] angels [r]desire to [r]look into.

[a] Ps. xliv. 21; Acts xv. 17; Rom. iii. 21; Heb. xi. 6, xii. 17.
[b] Ct. 1 Macc. iii. 48, ix. 26.
[c] 1 Cor. xv. 20.
[d] Jo. v. 39, vii. 52; Rom. viii. 27; 1 Cor. ii. 10; Rev. ii. 23.
[e] Heb. vii. 14; Acts ii. 25; Eph. v. 32.
[f] Lu. i. 20.
[g] Rom. viii. 9; Phil. i. 19; 2 Pet. i. 21.
[h] 1 Cor. i. 11, iii. 13; Heb. ix. 8, xii. 27; Col. i. 8; 2 Pet. i. 14; Ex. vi. 3.
[i] Ch. iv. 13, v. 1. Cf. Heb. ii. 10; Phil. iii. 10; also ref. under (*e*).
[k] Lu. xxiv. 26; 2 Pet. ii. 10; Jude 8.
[l] Isa. liii. 1; Jo. xii. 38; 1 Cor. xiv. 30; Mat. x. 26, xi. 25, 27, xvi. 17; Lu. ii. 35, x. 21, 22, xii. 2, xvii. 30; Rom. i. 17, 18, viii. 18; 2 Cor. ii. 10; Eph. iii. 5; Phil. iii. 15, etc.
[m] 2 Cor. iii. 3, viii. 19, 28; 2 Tim. i. 18; 1 Pet. iv. 10.
[n] Isa. xl. 21; Jo. iv. 25; Acts xx. 20; 1 Jo. i. 5, etc.
[o] Lu. iii. 18; Acts viii. 12, xiv. 15, 21, xvi. 10; Gal. i. 9.
[p] Acts ii. 4.
[q] Prov. xxiv. 1; Mat. xiii. 17; Lu. xxiii. 25.
[r] Lu. xxiv. 12; Jo. xx. 5, 11; Jas. i. 25; Gen. xxvi. 8.

[1] with regard to
[2] prophets earnestly enquired and searched
[3] *literally*, the grace unto you
[4] *i.e.* in reference to what (time), *or*, what kind of time
[5] that
[6] was declaring
[7] attesting
[8] unto
[9] glories
[10] after these
[11] *rather*, unto you
[12] were ministering
[13] were
[14] through
[15] *omit* have
[16] *omit* down
[17] *omit* the

The paragraph which now follows deals with the relation of the prophets to the salvation of which they prophesied. The salvation itself, however, continues to be the foremost thing. The notice of the prophetic ministry is not introduced with the view of indicating the essential identity of the offer of grace in the N. T. with that in the O. T., or the witness to the truth of the apostolic proclamation of grace which may be drawn from its harmony with the prophetical (so Gerhard, etc.). Neither is its object to recall the fact that, if they suffered, these Christians had only to face what the prophets had faced before them, while in respect of privilege they had the immense superiority of resting on a salvation accomplished, where these others had to rest on its promise (Schott). In this last case, the section would, indeed, furnish another reason why they should live a hopeful life. But it says nothing itself of the prophets as sufferers. It comes in, therefore, with the simpler object of exhibiting the grandeur of this salvation in the light of its interest to prophets and even to angels. (So Calvin, and after him the best interpreters.) What can be deduced from it on the subject of prophecy, therefore, is limited by this object.

Ver. 10. **With regard to which salvation.** The *salvation* here in view is the salvation already introduced first as 'ready to be revealed in the last time,' and then as a 'salvation of souls.' It is not to be limited either to the completed salvation of the future, or to the partial salvation of the present, but is God's salvation generally. This is indicated by the method of connection with ver. 9. The relative attaches ver. 10 closely to the preceding 'salvation of souls,' while the introduction of the noun after the relative shows, perhaps, that it is not so closely attached to the immediate antecedent as to make the subject of the one in all respects co-extensive with that of the other (Schott). The prophets referred to are obviously the O. T. prophets, as almost all interpreters hold. The supposition is advanced, however, that they are mainly the prophets of the Apostolic Church, with some of whom the Book of Acts mentions Peter himself to have been brought into personal contact, *e.g.* with Barnabas (Acts iv. 36), Agabus (xi. 28, xxi. 10), Judas and Silas (xv. 36). This view is supported by appeal to the prominent position occupied by these N. T. prophets (Eph. ii. 20, iii. 5, iv. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 2), to Peter's statement about the prophetic word (2 Pet. i. 19), and to such phrases as 'the Spirit of *Christ* which was in them,' which are held to apply rather to Christian than to Israelite prophets (so Plumptre). But, difficult as the paragraph in any case is, some of its clauses become doubly so on this supposition. Neither does the term 'prophets' here stand connected with the term 'apostles,' or with anything else naturally defining it as = those of the N. T. Church. — **earnestly sought and searched.** Both verbs have an intense force. The first is used, *e.g.*, of Esau's *careful* seeking of a place of repentance (Heb. xii. 17). The second, though it occurs nowhere else in the N. T., is used by the LXX., *e.g.*, of Saul's resolve to get at David's lurking-places, and '*search* him out throughout all the thousands of Judah' (1 Sam. xxiii. 23). They depict, therefore, the strength and earnestness of the interest with which the prophets gave their minds to the hidden things of this salvation. —**who prophesied of the grace destined for you.** The term 'grace' here is not to be distinguished (with Huther) from the 'salvation,' as if the latter denoted only the future salvation, and the former covered both the present and the future. It is simply another expression for the salvation dealt with all along, designating it now under the particular aspect of a free gift from God. The phrase 'the grace unto you' (as it literally is) means the grace *destined* or *reserved* for you, not (as Wiesinger, Schott, etc.) the grace which has *come* to you, or which ye have actually got. For this 'grace' is contemplated not from the viewpoint of the apostles, but from that of the prophets. The subjects of this grace are also emphasized here by the pointed 'unto *you*,' as the very parties now addressed by Peter, and therefore (if it is a reasonable supposition that the Epistle is directed to Pauline, and consequently mainly Gentile, Churches) to heirs of God's grace who were in the mass Gentiles. The entire clause is usually taken to characterize the O. T. prophets according to a function common to them as a whole (Schott, Huther, and most). It would thus have no more point than a general description of the prophets as men who, as a body, spoke of a grace which was meant for others than themselves. But the fact that, while the noun 'prophets' is without the article, the participle rendered 'who prophesied' has it, rather suggests that Peter has a certain class of prophets in view (Hofmann), as the associated terms suggest that he has a particular part of the prophetic communications in mind. Those particularly referred to, therefore, are prophets like Isaiah and others, who spoke of what was the great mystery to Israel—the interest which the Gentile world was to have in the salvation which was 'of the Jews.'

Ver. 11. **Searching what, or what manner of time,** or better, *searching with reference to what (season), or what kind of season.* This participial clause, introduced by the simple form of the intenser compound verb 'earnestly searched,' takes up the prophetic study and specifies the particular point to which it was directed. It was the question of the era at which this grace was to come. Both pronouns refer to the word *season.* They are not to be dealt with separately, as if the '*what*' meant 'which *person*,' and the 'what manner of' pointed to the *time* (so Peile, Mason, etc.). In that case the *man* in whom their expected Messiah was to appear would, as well as the date of his coming, be what they wish to ascertain. But the object of the prophetic reflection is here defined simply as the *time* itself, or the *kind* of time—a phrase meaning not (as Steinmeyer) 'the time or *rather* the kind of time,' but, in a descending climax, 'the time, or, failing that, the kind of time.' By diligent reflection these prophets sought to discover the precise period (whether soon or late), or, if that were denied them, at least the signs of the times—the kind of era (whether, *e.g.*, one of peace or one of war) at which the revelation given them of the destined admission of the Gentile world into Israel's grace was to be made good.—**the spirit of Christ in them.** This denotes the source of the communications which formed the subject of the study. So far, therefore, it also explains the impulse under which they both studied and declared them. They rose on the minds of the prophets in virtue of a power

which, though *in* them, was not that of their own intelligence. The men were conscious that those future things of grace which they saw inwardly came to them not as the forecastings of their own sagacity, but as the communications of a revealing Agent. Hence they both 'searched' them for themselves, and 'prophesied' of them to others. The revealing Power in them is designated 'the Spirit of Christ,' not in the sense of the Spirit that *speaks of* Christ (Augustine, Bengel, etc.), but in the sense of the Spirit that *belongs* to Christ, or possibly the Spirit that is *identical with* Christ. The designation is to be taken in the breadth which naturally belongs to it (cf. Rom. viii. 9, etc.). It is not to be reduced, contrary to the analogy of the Epistles, to anything so subjective as 'the Messiah-Spirit,' or 'the Messianic Spirit' (Mason), nor, on the other hand, is it used here with a view to the 'procession' of the Third Person of the Trinity (Cook). Its point is caught rather in the well-known sentence of the Epistle of Barnabas (chap. v.)—'the prophets having the gift from (Christ) Himself prophesied in reference to Him.' Peter does not draw any distinction here between the 'Spirit of *Christ*' as a purely official title, and the 'Spirit of Jesus,' or the 'Spirit of Jesus Christ' as the personal title, so that the designation should mean nothing more than that the Spirit of the *Messiah* (unidentified with the Christ of history) was in the prophets. He indicates rather that the Revealing Agent who gave the prophets their insight into a grace to come was Christ Himself—the very Christ now known to the Church as the subject of O. T. prophecy and the finisher of salvation. This is in accordance with analogous modes of statement in Peter (1 Pet. iii. 20) and Paul (1 Cor. x. 4, 9), as well as with the doctrine of the Reformed Church that the same Being has been, in all ages, the Revealer of God and the Minister of light and grace to the Church—the *Word* of God, the Logos, pre-incarnate, incarnate, or risen. It is admitted, therefore, by cautious exegetes like Huther, that the great majority of interpreters are right in recognising here a witness to the pre-existence of Christ, and to His pre-incarnate activity in the Church. Other expositions which deal with the term 'Spirit of Christ,' as if it were identical simply with 'Spirit of God,' come short of Peter's intention here. More is expressed than the general identity of the work of grace in the O. T. with that in the N. T., or the identity of the Spirit of God in the former with the Spirit of Christ in the latter (de Wette), or the idea that the Spirit, who worked in the prophets, was the same Spirit of God that Jesus received at His baptism, and since then has possessed (Schmid, Weiss, etc.).—**was declaring.** The action of the Spirit in the prophets is described first by a verb which, though used often in a less definite sense, has here probably the force which it has in 1 Cor. iii. 13 (of the day that shall *declare* every man's work), and in 2 Pet. i. 14 (of Christ *showing* Peter that he must shortly put off this tabernacle). This operation of the Spirit is further explained by the phrase—**when it testified beforehand**, or rather **attesting beforehand.** The verb is one of extremest rarity, scarcely known indeed elsewhere, whether in the N. T., in Ecclesiastical Greek, or in the Classics. It appears to have a definite and solemn force, explaining the inward declaration of the Spirit of Christ in the prophets to have taken a form which their consciousness could neither mistake nor withstand, the decided form of an *attestation* of certain facts of the future. It says nothing beyond this, however, and does not necessarily imply (as is supposed by Schott, etc.) that, in Peter's view, *speech* and not inward vision was the medium by which the Spirit's communications were conveyed to the prophets' minds. The future things thus attested are described as **the sufferings unto Christ** (*i.e.* destined, or in store, for Christ), **and the glories after these.** But whose sufferings and glories? Some take them to be those of believers, and translate the clause, *the sufferings* (*borne by Christians*) *in reference to Christ.* Calvin (as also Luther so far, Wiesinger, and originally Huther) hold them to be those of the Church as the mystical Christ, or rather those of Christ and the Church as mystically one. An analogy is then sought in Paul's statement about filling up 'that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ' (Col. i. 24). The use of the official mediatorial name, *Christ*, both there and here (instead of the personal Jesus Christ), is also supposed to intimate that the Subject in view is not the Christ of history, but the Mediator in His official capacity, so that the phrase suggests the mystical application to Christ's spiritual body. Others (*e.g.* Plumptre) point to the different form of expression used by Peter when he speaks of Christ's individual sufferings (1 Pet. iv. 13, v. 1), and regard the present sentence as the converse of Paul's, 'as the sufferings of Christ abound in us,' etc. (2 Cor. i. 5), what believers endure for Christ's sake being viewed here as shared by Christ Himself. So Plumptre would translate it, the sufferings *passing on to*, or *flowing over to*, Christ. All this, however, brings in ideas foreign to the context, which speaks of those things as already *reported* to the readers, obviously as the burden of the preaching which made them Christians. It is not necessitated by the use of the distinctive name *Christ*. It does not suit the statement that the thing which the prophets *searched* into was the *time* of these sufferings. For the Church was always more or less a suffering Church, though the sufferings of Messiah were both future to the prophets and a perplexity to Israel. It is also inconsistent with the analogy of the cognate phrase in ver. 10, 'the grace unto you.' Hence most interpreters are right in understanding the sufferings to be those of Christ Himself. The *glories*, therefore, will also be those which were destined by God to come to Christ, in the train and as the reward of those sufferings. The reward of Christ is regularly expressed by the singular, 'glory.' The unusual plural, 'glories,' is chosen here, either in reference to the several steps of His glorification, in His resurrection, ascension, session at God's right hand, and Second Advent (so Weiss, Schott, etc.), or simply as a balance to the other half of the clause, the standing phrase for what Christ had to endure being the plural form, 'sufferings.' The communications, therefore, unmistakeably attested by the Spirit of Christ to the minds of the prophets, concerned a Messiah who was destined to obtain glory only through suffering. A suffering Messiah was in any case a conception alien to the Israelite mind. A Messiah who, by His suffering, was to bring grace to the world outside Israel was still more so, and what the prophets strove to apprehend by diligent reflection on the revelations made to them was not the

fact itself (which was too clearly borne in by the Spirit upon their consciousness to admit of doubt), **but** the period at which it should come to pass. **The** communications particularly in view, therefore, **are** probably those made to prophets like Isaiah, who, in his great Passional (lii. 13–liii. 12), speaks of the sprinkling of the *nations*.

Ver. 12. **To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but** (rather) **unto you they were ministering those things.** The better accredited reading here is 'unto *you*' (not unto *us*). Peter, therefore, still looks specially to the interest which Gentile Christians, like those here addressed, had in the ministry referred to. He says nothing, however, to imply either that the prophets themselves had no personal interest in their communications, or that these communications did not bear upon their own times. He speaks simply of certain things in these communications, which the prophets understood to be for other times, and of the ministry which they discharged in relation to those things as a ministry in which they recognised others than themselves to have the main interest. The ministry in view is expressed by a term applicable to any kind of service, official or non-official. It is the word used by Paul when he speaks of the Corinthians as 'manifestly declared to be the Epistle of Christ *ministered* by us' (2 Cor. iii. 3). Here it refers evidently to the service of *announcing* to others what the Spirit had conveyed to their own minds. The entire sentence is connected closely with the preceding by the simple relative. The question, therefore, is: What is the relation thus intended between the *searching* of vers. 10, 11, and the *revelation* spoken of now? Many interpreters regard the latter as the *result* or *reward* of the former. And this is put in two different ways, either that the prophets searched, and *therefore* revelations were given them, *because* they were ministering for others; or, that they searched, and their search was answered by its being revealed to them *that* they were ministering for others. But to make their receipt of revelations (whether in the wide sense of revelations generally, or in the narrower sense of the revelation of the one fact that in some things they were speaking to a later age) dependent so far upon their own previous diligence in inquiry, is strangely out of harmony with the initiating and impelling activity ascribed here, and again in 2 Pet. i. 21, to the Spirit. The connection, therefore, is to be taken either thus: 'they searched, and to them, too, it was revealed;' or (with Huther, etc.), 'they searched *inasmuch* as it was revealed to them.' The revelation in view occasioned and incited their inquiry. It was discovered to them that in regard to certain things which the Spirit communicated they were dealing with things meant for others, and this fact (pointing, as it did, to the mystery of a place for the Gentile world sooner or later in Israel's grace) stimulated their inquiry. *How* this fact was discovered, or 'revealed,' to them, whether by a special intimation of the Spirit, or simply by the unmistakeable import of the communication itself regarding the future grace, is left unexplained.—**which** (things) **were now reported to you by means of those who made the glad tidings** (the Gospel) **known to you.** The relation of the 'which' here to the previous 'those things' is not exactly the close relation between relative and antecedent, but rather that between two distinct statements, of which the latter is an extension of the former. The things referred to, therefore, are not merely the 'sufferings' and 'glories' of Christ, but also the 'grace destined for you,' all those things, in short, already said to have been prophesied and searched by the prophets. The things which thus were the subject of prophetic interest and inquiry, are now referred to as having also formed the burden of the preaching of those who carried the Gospel into those Gentile territories, Pontus, Galatia, etc. Peter gives us no hint as to who these were. The form of the statement, however, rather implies that he did not rank himself among them. But if the men themselves are left unnamed, the power that made them what they were as preachers is noted. These preachers evangelized them **by the Holy Ghost sent from heaven.** The better reading here is not '*in*,' but '*by*' the Holy Ghost, the Spirit being represented simply as the instrument in whose might they effected what they did. As the prophets had their revelations only by the action of the Spirit, the preachers of the Gospel had their power to preach only by the Holy Ghost. But while the Spirit who gifted the prophets is described as the Spirit of Christ *in them*, the Spirit who gifted the preachers is described as the Holy Ghost *sent from heaven*—a designation pointing to the Pentecostal descent of the Spirit, and, therefore, to the superior privilege of the preachers. So the statement regarding the prophets ends, as it began, with facts enforcing the magnitude of the salvation or grace of which the readers had been made heirs. The verbs are given in the simple historical past, *were reported* (in spite of the 'now'), *preached* (not *have preached*), *sent*, as Peter carries his readers back from their present standing in grace to the definite acts and events which prepared that standing for them once for all.—It is necessary to add that while the generally-accepted construction of this verse has been followed, it leaves something to be desired. Another method of relating the several clauses, which has to a certain extent the sanction of Luther's name, has been worked out by Hofmann, and accepted by some others. According to this, the verse would run thus, with a parenthesis in the heart of it: 'To whom were revealed those things (for they ministered not for themselves, but rather for others), which were now reported unto you,' etc. This establishes an apt contrast between the inward *revelation* in the one case and the public *reporting* in the other. It gets rid of the awkwardness of making the mere fact that the prophets ministered certain things for others than themselves the subject of a *revelation*, and has other recommendations to balance the disadvantage of introducing a parenthesis immediately after the leading verb.—The grandeur of this salvation or grace is illustrated by one thing else which, as being itself so peculiar, gets a peculiar place and expression here—**which things angels desire to look into.** By the 'which things' we are to understand neither 'the whole contents of the message of salvation' (so Huther, Brückner), nor the mystery of the spiritual change effected by the gospel (Schott), but simply the things already dealt with in the section. Those things, the grace ordained for the Gentiles, and the sufferings and glories of Christ in relation thereto, which were prophesied of and searched by prophets, and

reported in these last days by Christ's preachers, were also an object of interest to the angelic world. The intensity of this interest is expressed by the strong term *desire*, or *long*—the word used by Christ Himself in view of His hastening passion, 'With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer' (Luke xxii. 15). Its continuance is indicated by the present tense. Its nature is described by the graphic term which is poorly represented by the 'look into' of the A. V., and is difficult in any case adequately to render. Though perhaps sometimes used of a passing glance at an object, it has usually the idea of intent study, and a study which involves a stooping, bending posture on the part of the student. It is applied to the man who 'looketh into the perfect law of liberty' (Jas. i. 25) as if he were putting himself into the posture of one who gazes into a mirror. It is also applied by Luke (xxiv. 12) to Peter himself '*stooping down*' when he peered into the tomb (which passage, however, is somewhat doubtfully accredited); and, again, by John (xx. 5, 11) both to Peter and to Mary as they 'stooped down' and looked into the sepulchre. It is more than doubtful whether Peter had in view here either the two angels whom Mary Magdalene saw in the Lord's tomb, as Canon Cook supposes, or the cherubim overshadowing the ark, as Grotius, Beza, and others imagine. But as the term expresses a change of position in order to view something, it may point at once to the straining interest with which the angelic world as such (the noun is without the article, and denotes angels generally) contemplates the salvation of which even outcast Gentiles are participants, and the fact that, as they stand outside that salvation, their interest in it is that of spectators who recognise the glory and ponder the mystery of the grace which effects a change of which they have themselves no personal knowledge—the change from sin to holiness (cf. also Heb. ii. 16; Eph. iii. 10).

CHAPTER I. 13–16.

Exhortations to Hopefulness and Holiness.

13 WHEREFORE [a]gird up the [b]loins of your [c]mind, be [d]sober, and hope to the [e]end [1] for the grace that is to be [f]brought [2] unto you at [3] the [g]revelation of Jesus Christ: 14 as [h]obedient [i]children,[4] not [k]fashioning yourselves according 15 to [5] the former [l]lusts in your [m]ignorance: but [n]as he which hath [o]called you is holy,[6] so be ye holy [7] in all manner of 16 [p]conversation;[8] because it is written, [q]Be ye holy;[9] for I am holy.

[a] Prov. xxx. 17. [b] Ex. xii. 11; Lu. xii. 35; Eph. vi. 14. [c] Mat. xxii. 37; Mk. xii. 30; Lu. i. 51, x. 37; Eph. ii. 3, iv. 18; Col. i. 21; Heb. viii. 10, x. 16; 2 Pet. iii. 1; Num. xv. 39 (LXX.). [d] 1 Thes. v. 6, 8; 2 Tim. iv. 5; 1 Pet. iv. 7, v. 8. [e] Cf. 2 Macc. xii. 42; Judith xi. 6. [f] 2 Pet. i. 17, 18, 21. [g] Cf. on ch. i. 7. [h] Heb. v. 8; Rom. i. 5. [i] Cf. Eph. ii. 3, v. 6, 8; 2 Pet. ii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 22; 2 Kings xxii. 36; and see on 1 Pet. i. 2. [k] Rom. xii. 2. [l] Ch. ii. 11, iv. 2, 3; 2 Pet. ii. 18; Rom. xiii. 14; Gal. v. 16; Eph. ii. 3; 1 Jo. ii. 16. [m] Acts iii. 17, xvii. 30; Eph. iv. 18; and cf. Wisd. xiv. 22. [n] Cf. Eph. iv. 24. [o] Rom. viii. 30, ix. 11; Gal. v. 8; Heb. iii. 1, ix. 15. [p] Ch. i. 18, ii. 12, iii. 1, 2, 16; 2 Pet. ii. 7, iii. 11; Gal. i. 13; Eph. iv. 22; 1 Tim. iv. 12; Heb. xiii. 7; Jas. iii. 13. [q] Lev. xi. 44, xix. 2, xx. 7, 26.

[1] *literally*, Wherefore having girt up the loins of your mind, being sober, hope perfectly [2] that is being brought [3] *or*, in
[4] *literally*, children of obedience [5] *or*, in conformity with
[6] *rather*, after the (pattern of) the Holy One who called you
[7] *or*, prove ye yourselves also holy [8] living, conduct, *or* behaviour
[9] Ye shall be holy

The rapid outline of the magnificence of the salvation prepares the way for what is to be urged in the form of duty. The Preface, which has so much of the Pauline style both in idea and in conciliatory intention, has closed by adding to the prophets and evangelists, who are named as ministers of that salvation, angels as rapt students of the same. From this Peter passes at once to the main burden of his Epistle, and begins by giving a series of counsels which extend into the second chapter. These counsels deal successively with hope, holiness, godly fear, brotherliness, and increase in grace. They are all coloured by the light of consolation. They are all practical unfoldings and personal applications of what has been already instanced in the Preface. They are enforced by considerations drawn from the realities of the spiritual calling. A reason for each is found in the grace which is possessed. Here, as everywhere, the ethical precepts of the Gospel are rooted in the facts and truths of Revelation, and receive their moral momentum from the prior gift of grace.

Ver. 13. **Wherefore**: the exhortation is thus made immediately dependent on the previous statement of grace. The duty is born of the

privilege. The 'wherefore,' however, points back to the idea which called forth the ascription of praise with which the introduction opened, and not merely to the thought of the necessity of trial (de Wette), the grandeur of the grace (Calvin), the destination of the salvation from of old for these very readers (Œc.), or anything else which comes in only in the train of the leading idea. The connection, therefore, is not of the indeterminate form, 'Seeing this salvation was designed for you, and is so studied even by angels, be not ye unregardful of it' (so substantially Alford, etc.). It is far more pointed than that, and amounts to this,—'God, then, by so marvellous a provision of His mercy, having begotten you unto a living hope, see that you make that hope your own, and live wholly up to it.'—**having girt up the loins of your mind.** The first exhortation is not to watchfulness *and* endurance in hope (Alford), but to hope specifically. The three verbs do not enjoin each a distinct duty, but the first two ('gird up' and 'be sober') express conditions which are necessary to the discharge of one great duty of hope which is denoted by the third. The act of tucking up the loose Eastern tunic in preparation for travelling or running, for work or conflict, or for any kind of exertion (cf. Israel's preparation for the flight from Egypt, Ex. xii. 11; Elijah's for running before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel, 1 Kings xviii. 46; and David's for the battle, Ps. xviii. 32, 39), is the natural figure of a certain mental preparedness. There is an evident fitness in applying the figure to men in the pilgrim state described in i. 1 and ii. 11, and it is possible that Christ's own injunction (Luke xii. 35) may have given form to Peter's phrase. The tense indicates that the attitude of mind here in view must first be taken up definitely and once for all before the kind of hopefulness which is charged on these sojourners can be made good. The term used here for 'mind' is admirably in point. It is the term which denotes the understanding in its practical issues, and in its intercourse with the outer world, the higher intellectual nature specially in its dealings with things without, the power of thought 'as a process of close and thorough scrutiny of outer objects, and as a special outward attitude of the soul' (Beck, *Biblical Psychology*, p. 71). The clause, therefore, expresses the necessity of a certain mental concentration, the putting a check upon the 'dissipation of thought' on the interests or trials of the present. The man who will live up to the hope into which God begat him must begin by reining in the tendency of his thoughts to wander everywhere, and by turning his mind, in its habitual outward attitude, to the great vision of the future. — **being sober,** a second condition necessary to the hopefulness which should characterize the Christian pilgrim. The sobriety in view here, as often elsewhere, involves much more than moderation in regard to appetite. It means the settled self-control, the elevated equanimity which should make the Christian superior to the distractions of the present, and save him equally from undue elation in the pleasures of time, and from excess of sorrow in its pains. This, as a disposition to be continuously maintained, is expressed in the present tense, 'practising sobriety,' where the former condition was in the past.—**hope perfectly:** the former things have defined the *kind* of hopefulness which is urged. This is usually taken to be still more distinctly described by the addition of the term which is rendered 'to the end' by the A. V. It is doubtful, however, to which of the two clauses this adverb (which is found nowhere else in the New Testament, and which has the larger sense of 'completely,' 'so as to leave nothing lacking,' rather than the temporal force 'to the end') is to be attached. It may qualify the sobriety ('practising a *perfect* sobriety')—a connection entirely in point, and saving one of these related phrases from being left in an unqualified independence unlike the other two. If it is attached to the 'hope' (as most interpreters attach it), it defines it as one that will rise to the full idea of a regenerate hope, and leave nothing to desire. Once let a guard be established against the natural waywardness of thought, and let the self-collectedness be sustained which looks with a calm eye upon earth's joys and sorrows, and they will be able to lead a life of hopeful expectation worthy of that act of God's grace by which they were begotten into hope. —**for the grace.** It is questioned whether we should translate '*for* the grace' or '*on* the grace.' The construction is peculiar, and found exactly, indeed, nowhere else, in the New Testament, except in 1 Tim. v. 5 (in 1 Pet. iii. 5 also, according to the received text, but not according to the best editors). It is not uncommon, however, in the Greek Version of the Old Testament. Some take the sense to be—make the grace the *strength* or *foundation* of your hope. So Huther considers grace to be presented here simply as that 'from which the fulfilment of hope is expected,' and others (*e.g.* Mason) hold it introduced as that in the strength of which we are confidently to look for glory. The truth which is struck, however, is deeper. Grace is exhibited here as the *object* of our hope, and the shade of meaning suggested by the uncommon construction is simply that our hope is to be *turned* fully and confidently *toward* it. What is otherwise called glory or salvation is here called grace, the believer's present being seminally the believer's future, and glory being the blossom of which grace is the bud.—**which is being brought unto you:** not 'which *is to be* brought,' as if the object of hope were remote, and wholly of the future; but 'which is *a-bringing*,' already on the wing, and bearing ever nearer.—**in the revelation of Jesus Christ,** that is, at His final advent. Both the currency of the phrase itself and the close connection instituted by the opening 'wherefore' between the ideas of this section and those of the Preface forbid us to understand it of the present revelation of Christ in the Gospel.

Ver. 14. **As children of obedience:** a second counsel is thus introduced, dealing with a holiness which is to be not less complete than the hope. The one rises naturally out of the other. Hope is a sanctifying principle, promoting holiness, while it is itself also brightened and strengthened by it. It is in the character of 'children of obedience' that they are charged to aim at a perfect holiness. It is as becomes those with whom obedience (here again in the largest and most inclusive sense) has become a new nature. The familiar Hebrew figure for permanence of quality represents them as drawing the inspiration of their life from obedience, as related to it like children to a mother.—**not fashioning your-**

selves in conformity with your former lusts in your ignorance: in the character of the obedient, and in order to holiness, they must renounce a certain *fashion* of life. The verb occurs only once elsewhere in the New Testament (Rom. xii. 2). In the heart of it is the term which is applied to the world in its aspect of transience, 'the *fashion* of this world passeth away' (1 Cor. vii. 31), and which is used of Christ in the great Christological statement in Phil. ii. 7—'found in *fashion* as a man.' The term refers to the externals of an object, all that wherein an object *appears*, rather than to what is intrinsic. It carries with it, therefore, the idea of the changeable and illusory. This unstable, deceptive *form* of life which they are not to assume is the old life of heathen lust, the life in which they ignorantly followed 'the capricious guidance of the passions.' (See Lightfoot on *Philippians*, p. 128.) *Ignorance* (in the ethical sense of heathen ignorance of God and the things of God, as also in Eph. iv. 18; Acts xvii. 30) is represented as the stage of their career ('*the time of* your ignorance') when passion was their life (so the Revised Version, Calvin, etc.), or rather as the element in which the passion was bred which gave the stamp to their life. Probably Peter has in view those grosser immoralities which are invariably associated with idolatry, and which Paul (Rom. i. 18, etc.) traces back to ignorance of God. The word used for 'lusts,' however, covers not only sensual passions, but all those unregulated desires which are summarily comprehended under 'the lust of the eye,' as well as 'the lust of the flesh' (1 John ii. 16).

Ver. 15. **But according to the Holy One who called you, prove ye yourselves also holy.** Instead of letting their life revert to the type of those renounced impurities, they must show it conformed to no lower standard than that of God. The A. V. misses the point here. What it rendered 'as' means 'after the pattern,' or 'after the measure of' (as in 1 Pet. iv. 6; Rom. xv. 5; Eph. ii. 2, etc.), and what it gives as a mere adjective 'holy' is a personal name. God obtains here a twofold designation appropriate to the precept, and furnishing motives for its observance. He is 'the Holy One,'—in the Old Testament the great theocratic title, expressing on the one hand the ethical separateness of God, His incomparable elevation above other gods, and above everything creaturely; and on the other hand, His approach to the creature in the selection of a separated people. 'Holiness would not be holiness, but exclusiveness, if it did not presuppose God's entrance into multifarious relations, and thereby revelation and communication' (Schmieder, cf. Oehler's *Theology of the Old Testament*, i. § 44). And He is the One 'who called' them,—here (as in 2 Pet. i. 3; Gal. i. 6; Rom. viii. 30, etc., where we have the same tense) of the act of grace which took them effectually out of their old world, and brought them into their new relation. The act of the 'call' (which is one of Peter's most familiar thoughts, occupying a larger space with him than even with Paul in proportion to the extent of his writings) corresponds, therefore, with the character of God as the Holy One, as the latter title implies His assuming men into near relation with Himself.—**in your every walk.** A holiness after God's pattern, and befitting children of obedience, must needs be a separateness from the world complete enough to show itself in all and every part of their behaviour. The word rendered 'conversation' in the A. V. (cf. Shakespeare's 'Octavia is of holy, cold, and still conversation,' *Ant. and Cleo.* ii. 6, 13), but denoting the whole course of life, is another of Peter's recurrent terms. It is rendered by the Revised Version 'manner of life' in 1 Pet. i. 18, ii. 16, and in all the Pauline occurrences (Gal. i. 13; Eph. iv 22; 1 Tim. iv. 12), but variously elsewhere, as 'manner of living' here, 'behaviour' in 1 Pet. ii. 12, iii. 1, 2; 'life' in 2 Pet. ii. 7, Heb. xiii. 7, Jas. iii. 13; and 'living,' in 2 Pet. iii. 11.

Ver. 16. **Because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy.** The future, 'ye shall be,' is better supported than the imperative, 'be ye.' The sense, however, remains substantially the same. Peter appends a reason for his counsel, and this he expresses in words which he takes from God's charge to Israel. They occur repeatedly in the Pentateuch (*e.g.* Lev. xi. 44, xix. 2, x. 7, 26), but they apply with even greater force to the subject of God's wider choice in the New Testament Israel. They are used by Peter because they mean that the relation which results from God's call, being a covenant relation, conveys obligations on two sides.

CHAPTER I. 17–21.

Exhortation to a Life of Godly Fear.

17 AND if ye [a] call on the Father,[1] who without [b] respect of persons [c] judgeth according to every [2] man's [d] work,
18 [e] pass the time of your [f] sojourning *here* [3] in [g] fear: forasmuch

[a] Acts ii. 21, ix. 14, 21, xxii. 16; Rom. x. 12, 13; 1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 22. Cf. Ps. iii. 2, vi. 2, 7, etc.

[b] Cf. Jas. ii. 9; Acts x. 34; Rom. ii. 11; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25.
[c] Specially ch. ii. 23; also ch. iv. 5; 2 Tim. iv. 1; Acts xvii. 31; Rom. iii. 6; Rev. xix. 11, 18, etc.
[d] Cf. generally Acts iii. 16; Rom. vii. 5; 1 Cor. iii. 13; Heb. vi. 10; Rev. xxii. 12.
[e] Heb. x. 33, xiii. 18; 2 Cor. i. 12; 1 Tim. iii. 15; Eph. ii. 3; 2 Pet. ii. 18.
[f] Acts xiii. 17; Gen. xlvii. 9; Ps. cxx. 5.
[g] Ch. ii. 18, iii. 2, 15; Acts ix. 31; Rom. iii. 18, xiii. 7; 2 Cor. v. 11, vii. 1; Eph. v. 21.

[1] *rather*, And if ye call on Him as Father [2] *or*, each [3] *omit* here

as ye know[4] that ye were not [h]redeemed with [i]corruptible
things, *as* silver and gold,[5] from your [k]vain [l]conversation[6]
19 *received* by tradition from your fathers;[7] but with the [m]precious
[n]blood of Christ, as of[8] a [o]lamb [p]without blemish and without
20 [q]spot: who verily[9] was [r]foreordained[10] [s]before the foundation
of the world, but was [t]manifest[11] in these [u]last times[12] for
21 you,[13] who by him[14] [v]do believe [w]in God,[15] that [x]raised him
up[16] from the dead, and gave him [y]glory; that your faith and
hope might be in God.[17]

[h] Ps. cxxix. 8; Lu. xxiv. 21; Tit. ii. 14.
[i] Ch. i. 23; Rom. i. 23; 1 Cor. ix. 25, xv. 53, 54.
[k] Acts xiv. 15; 1 Cor. iii. 20, xv. 17; Tit. iii. 9; Jas. i. 26.
[l] Cf. refs. to ver. 15.
[m] Jas. v. 7; 2 Pet. i. 4.
[n] Acts xx. 24; 1 Pet. i. 2; Heb. xii. 24, etc.
[o] Isa. liii. 7; Jo. i. 29. 36; Acts viii. 32.
[p] Eph. i. 4. v. 27; Col. i. 22; Heb. ix. 14; Jude 24; Rev. xiv. 5.
[q] 1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Pet. iii. 14; Jas i. 27.
[r] Rom viii. 29, xi. 2; Acts xxiv. 5.
[s] Jo. xvii. 24; Eph. i. 4. Cf. also Heb. iv. 3, ix 26, etc.
[t] Heb. ix. 26; 1 Jo. i. 2, iii. 5.
[u] Heb. i. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 3; Jude 18; and cf. 1 Pet. i. 5.
[v] Acts iii. 16; and cf. also Acts xvi. 15.
[w] Acts xx 21, xxiv. 15, xxvi. 18.
[x] Mat. xvii. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 12; Gal. i. 1; Heb. xi. 19, etc.
[y] Mat. xxviii. 18; Acts ii. 33, iii. 13; Eph. i. 20; Phil. ii. 9; Heb. ii. 9; 1 Pet. iii. 22.

[4] *better simply*, knowing
[5] *more strictly*, that ye were redeemed not with corruptible things, silver or gold
[6] manner of life, *or*, walk
[7] ancestral, *or as in the Revised Version*, handed down from your fathers
[8] *omit* of, *or arrange as in Revised Version*, but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ
[9] indeed
[10] *literally*, foreknown
[11] manifested
[12] *literally*, at the end of the times
[13] *i.e.* on your account
[14] *i.e.* through him
[15] *rather*, are believers on God
[16] raised him, *or*, aroused him from the dead
[17] *or*, so that your faith should also be hope toward God

The exhortation to a walk in holiness is followed immediately by an exhortation to a walk in godly fear. The way in which this section is connected with the preceding shows that the latter charge is given in intimate kinship with the former, as the former rises naturally out of the exhortation to hope which forms the basis of the series of counsels. 'Fear' is presented here very much as it is in Paul's 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God' (2 Cor. vii. 1). It is obviously the fear which is born of grace, in contrast with the fear which 'hath torment' (1 John iv. 18) as born of nature, and the fear which goes with the spirit of bondage born of the law (Rom. viii. 15). It stands in the nearest relation, therefore, to holiness, serving as its safeguard, acting as its incentive, encompassing it as the atmosphere in which it lives. It is enforced in the following paragraph by two large considerations, the impartial righteousness of God (ver. 17), and the price which it cost Him to redeem their life from its vanity (vers. 18–21). The 'fear' which is thus recommended is shown thereby all the more clearly to be not only consistent with the filial freedom of the believer, but essential to a walk worthy of his calling, elevating where fear usually degrades, and helping to nearness and likeness to God where fear tends naturally to distance. The connection of the several clauses, however, and the precise succession of ideas are by no means easy to determine. Most interpreters regard the 18th verse as simply supplementary to the 17th, and as pointing the injunction to a walk in godly fear more strongly. Some (*e.g.* Hofmann), on the other hand, take the thought of ver. 17 to be complete within itself. In that case the statement of the price of redemption would be introductory to the subsequent exhortation to brotherly love. Others (*e.g.* Schott) think that the 18th verse is intended to explain the connection between the two parts of the 17th, the price, which it has cost God to bring in a redemption that has opened so glorious a future, making the judgment which must precede that future all the more solemn, and serving, therefore, to exhibit all the more seriously the need of a walk in godly fear.

Ver. 17. **And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work.** The A. V. misses the point by failing to notice that there are two distinct predications, namely, that He whom all believers invoke in prayer is Father indeed, but also and none the less Judge. If it is right to discover, as most do, a reference in this to the Lord's Prayer, Peter would seem to remind them that the God whom Christ had taught them to look to as Father is One in whom there is no breach between parental love and judicial rectitude, and with whom there is none of that partiality on which it is natural to presume in the case of earthly fathers. The verb, meaning (as the A. V. correctly translates it) to 'call on,' or invoke, and not merely to name, suits in any case the idea of prayer. The 'judgeth' is in the present tense, not as predicating a Divine judgment which goes on now in distinction from the judgment of the future, but simply as denoting the prerogative or function of judgment which belongs naturally to this Father. The qualifying term, 'without respect of persons,' occurs nowhere else in this particular form, although similar forms are used in reference to God by Peter himself in the discourse following the visit of Cornelius (Acts x. 34), as well as by Paul (Rom. ii. 11; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25), and, in reference to men, by James (ii. 1, 9). The Old Testament formula, 'to accept the counten

ance of any one,' on which they found, is used indeed both in the good sense of being well inclined to one, and in the bad sense of showing a partial favour. But in the N. T. it has only the bad sense. The standard of this judgment, which is oftener said to be our works, is here described as each man's work, the singular 'work' pointing to the unity which each man's life with all its particular acts presents to God, while the significant 'each' indicates that this impartial judgment of God takes men not in the mass, but individually, and every man for himself, whether son or not. **in fear pass the time of your sojourning** (or, more simply, and with obvious reference to the 'walk' of ver. 15, **walk during the time of your sojourning**). The *fear* (in the original set emphatically first in the clause) which is so characteristic a note of Old Testament piety, occupies also no small place in the N. T. It appears there both in the large sense of reverence, or the feeling which makes it a pain to the child to dishonour or grieve the Father, in the general sense of the feeling which a man has who is on his guard, knowing that he may err (which Schott thinks is the point here), and in the more specific sense of the feeling which the Judge inspires, and which, as Calvin observes, is here opposed to the sense of security. Thus motives to a walk of serious circumspection are drawn from these various considerations—that to God belongs of necessity the attribute of judgment, which reflects itself on every man individually and without exception, that He sees men's scattered acts in the unity which is given them by their determining principle, and judges each man's life, therefore, as one work which must stand as a whole on one side or other, and that He judgeth impartial judgment which can extend no exemption and indulge no favouritism towards the sons whose privilege it is to appeal confidently to Him as Father. The character of the time, too, should itself be a motive to the same—a time of sojourning, of separation from the true home, and therefore a time when there is about us, both in pleasure and in persecution, so much to tempt us to forget the Father's house and resign ourselves to the walk of the children of this world.

Ver. 18. **Knowing that not with corruptible things, silver or gold, were ye redeemed.** The injunction to a walk in godly fear, which is sustained by motives of this strength and variety, was implicitly enforced (as Huther rightly notices) by the relation which the cognate terms of vers. 15 and 17 indicate between the God who *calls* them and the elect who respond by 'calling on' Him. It is now more explicitly enforced by a positive statement, the terms of which are difficult to construe, but the scope of which is that the thought of what it cost to help them to break with the old walk of heathenism should be argument enough for cultivating now a walk of gravity and circumspection. A redemption is in view which is expressed by a verb that is found in the N. T. only in other two passages (Tit. ii. 14; Luke xxiv. 21), although several terms connected with it occur not unfrequently. It has radically the sense of redeeming by payment of a ransom price. Of the three New Testament occurrences, one has the political or theocratic sense of delivering the kingdom of Israel, and the specific idea of price recedes into the background (Luke xxiv. 21). The other two keep the idea of the ransom price in the foreground. In the Old Testament, the term and its cognates are used in a variety of cases, *e.g.* of recovering something which has been devoted by substituting an equivalent in its place (Lev. xxvii. 27), of buying back something that has been sold (Lev. xxv. 25), of ransoming souls by a money payment to the Lord when Israel was numbered (Ex. xxx. 12–16), of redeeming the first-born by a price paid to Aaron (Num. iii. 44–51). The terms apply in the New Testament to ransoming from the bondage of evil (Tit. ii. 14), as well as from the penalty of evil. Here the ransom price is stated first negatively as not 'corruptible' (or 'perishable') things, not even the most valuable of these, such as silver or gold. The form of the words here used for silver and gold is that used generally, though not invariably, for the coined metals, pieces of money; hence some think that the writer has in mind here the sacred money paid for the redemption of the first-born or as the expiation-money for those who were enrolled by being numbered. But the contrast with the 'precious blood' makes such a limitation inept. The A. V. here gives 'and' for 'or,' which is the case also in one or two other passages (Mark vi. 11; 1 Cor. xi. 27), and is due (as is suggested by Lillie) probably to following the Genevan and Bishops' Bibles.—**from your vain walk handed down by your fathers.** What they were ransomed from is a particular manner of life which formed a bondage too strong to be broken by any ordinary ransom. This manner of life is described as 'vain,' the adjective here selected as the note of 'vanity' implying not so much the hollowness of the life as its futility and resultlessness—the fact that it missed its aim, and that nothing of real worth issued from it. It is further described by a term meaning 'ancestral,' 'hereditary,' or 'traditional,' which indicates how mighty a spell it must have wielded over them. It was a life 'fortified and almost consecrated to their hearts by the venerableness of age and ancestral authority' (Lillie), and thereby entrenched the more strongly in its vanity. Both these terms suit Gentile life. The 'vain' expresses what a life is which has no relation to God. It rules the other phrase 'ancestral,' or 'handed down from your fathers,' and makes it descriptive of a Gentile life rather than a Jewish (see also the Introduction). What could set them free from the despotism of a life, poor as the life might be, which not only ran the course of natural inclination, but laid upon them those strong bonds of birth, respect for the past, relationship, habit, example? Nothing but a new moral power, Peter reminds them, which it cost something incalculably more precious than silver or gold to bring in, namely, the sinless life of the Messiah.

Ver. 19. **but with precious blood, as of a lamb blameless and spotless, to wit Christ's.** The construction here is doubtful and difficult, owing to the term 'Christ's' being thrown to the end. The view which is adopted of the peculiar arrangement of the words in the original affects our understanding, not indeed of the main idea, but of the exact relation which the two terms 'lamb' and 'Christ' are intended to occupy to each other, and the precise force of the 'as' by which they are connected. The clause may be construed (so Steiger, etc.) thus—'with precious blood, as if with the blood of a lamb . . . to wit, Christ;' or (so Lillie, etc.), with *the* precious

blood, as of a lamb . . . of Christ;' or, 'with precious blood, as of a lamb . . . the blood of Christ' (so Beza, Alford, etc., and substantially Wiesinger, Huther, and the R. V.). The first of these explanations gives greater importance to the idea of the 'lamb' than to the mention of 'Christ.' The second is urged on the ground that blood is not of itself a true contrast to 'corruptible things,' and that neither blood of itself nor the blood of a sacrificial animal, but only Christ's blood, has value in redemption. The third is both simpler and more in harmony with Peter's style, as this is not the only instance of terms introduced in antecedent opposition (cf. ii. 7). Hence we have the cost of redemption defined here first as 'precious *blood*,' and not any 'corruptible thing' (the Old Testament view of the *life* in the blood giving reality to the contrast), then as *Christ's* blood, and further as blood with the ethical value of blood shed by One in the character of spotlessness and blamelessness. The 'as,' therefore, is not a mere note of comparison, but an index to the quality of the subject, and to the worth of the life surrendered. The point of the statement is not to institute a direct *comparison* between Christ and a lamb, nor to represent the means by which the redemption was effected as comparable in value to the blood of a stainless lamb (Schott, etc.), nor to explain why the blood of Christ is precious beyond the preciousness of all corruptible things, namely, in so far as it is the blood of the Christ who is distinguished as the perfect Lamb (Steiger, etc.), but to exhibit the cost of the redemption from the heathen life of sin as nothing less than the surrender of a life of sinless perfection. A death was endured by Christ which had in it the ethical qualities figured by lamb-like blamelessness and spotlessness, and only such a ransom could bring in a new constraining power sufficient to break the thraldom of the vain hereditary manner of life to which these Gentiles had been helpless slaves. The reference to a lamb in this connection has an obvious fitness on Peter's lips. It was in the character of the Lamb, as that name was proclaimed by the Baptist, that Simon, by his brother Andrew's intervention, first recognised Jesus to be the Messiah (John i. 35–42), and the impression of that first recognition of the Christ could never be effaced. The terms 'blameless' and 'spotless,' too, are terms applicable to the lambs of the Old Testament system, with which every Israelite was so familiar. The former represents the usual Old Testament phrase for the freedom from all physical defects which was required in the sacrificial victims (Ex. xii. 5; Lev. xxii. 20, and cf. Heb. ix. 14). The latter, though not found in the New Testament, except in a moral sense (2 Pet. iii. 14; 1 Tim. vi. 14; Jas. i. 27), and applied properly only to persons (except perhaps 1 Tim. vi. 14), expresses summarily other ceremonial perfections which were necessary in the offerings (Lev. xxii. 18–25). The lamb particularly in Peter's view here, is variously identified, as *e.g.* with the Paschal Lamb (Wiesinger, Hofmann, Alford, etc.), with the lamb of Isa. liii. (Schott, Huther, etc.), or with the general idea signified by the various lambs of the Old Testament service and realized in Christ. The dispute is of small importance, as it is not probable that these different lambs would be sharply distinguished in the consciousness of the Israelite. The fact that Peter is dealing here with the question of a ransom from a certain bondage makes it reasonable to suppose him to have before his eye some lamb that occupied a well-understood place in God's service under the old economy, and points, therefore, to the Paschal Lamb, which was associated with the release from the bondage of Egypt, and was also the only animal that could be used for the service to which it was dedicated. On the other hand, it may be urged in favour of the lamb of Isa. liii. 7, that Peter elsewhere seems to have that section of prophecy in view, that the Old Testament itself (in the Greek Version) employs a different term for the Paschal Lamb in capital sections, and that the New employs statedly another word than the one used by Peter for the Paschal Lamb. In either case the lamb is introduced here not with immediate reference to its *sacrificial* character, but in respect of those ethical qualities which are expressed by the adjectives. The expiatory or sacrificial value of Christ's death is no doubt at the basis of the statement, and the idea of ransom from sin as a power is not disconnected from the idea of a ransom from sin as a penalty. But the redemption which Peter deals with here, being a redemption from the spell and thraldom of a vain mode of living, is an ethical redemption, and Christ's death is presented immediately here as a spiritual power breaking a certain despotism. How Christ's death carries this weight with it is not explained, except in so far as the whole statement suggests qualities in it which made it a new and supreme constraining power.

Ver. 20. **Who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world.** The cost of this redemption is still in view, and is presented in a yet stronger light by a statement bearing at once on the dignity of the Efficient Agent, the date of the Divine purpose, and the character of the subjects for whom it was destined. Peter reverts to the idea of i. 2, and represents the Efficient Agent of the redemption as appearing indeed in time, but provided and kept in view before all time. The phrase, 'before the foundation of the world,' used by Paul (Eph. i. 4), and by Christ Himself in reference to His own pre-incarnate life (John xvii. 24), and occurring also repeatedly in the form '*from* the foundation of the world' (Matt. xiii. 35, xxv. 34; Luke xi. 50; Heb. iv. 3, ix. 26; Rev. xiii. 8, xvii. 8), carries us above all time into an eternity out of which time and history issued, and in which God's purpose was formed. In this pre-mundane eternity Christ was contemplated and recognised as that which He was shown to be in time. The E. V. here departs from the literal translation, which it retains in the other six places in which the verb or its noun occurs, and substitutes 'foreordained' for 'foreknown.' The foreknowledge no doubt here, as in i. 2, means not mere prescience, but recognition, and lies near the idea of providing or determining. But while knowledge and will may be identical or coincident in the Divine mind, they are distinct things in our minds. The revelation of God, adapting itself to the modes of our thoughts, distinguishes between these two things, prescience and foreordination, and Peter himself indeed mentions them as distinct (Acts ii. 23). It is right, therefore, to keep the literal sense 'foreknown,' the idea being simply this—that Christ was eternally in God's view and before God's mind as the Agent of this redemption. It is not necessary, therefore, to suppose (with

Hofmann, Alford, etc.) that there is a comparison here between the lamb that was singled out of the flock and marked out for the Passover sacrifice some days before the occasion (Ex. xii. 3–6), and Christ predestined in eternity for a service in time.—**but was manifested**: the tense changes here. The 'foreknown' is expressed by the perfect; literally, 'has been foreknown,' in reference to the place held and continuing to be held by Christ in the Divine mind. The 'manifested' is in the past, since what is in view is the historical manifestation once for all accomplished. The verb, which in ver. 4 is used of the future advent of Christ, is to be understood here neither of the continuous manifestation of Christ by the preaching of the Gospel, nor of His coming forth from the secret counsel of God, but simply of His first advent. And as the verb describes the revelation of a 'previously hidden existence' (Fronmüller), the best exegetes agree in regarding the statement as inconsistent with the theory of a merely ideal existence of Christ before His appearance in history, and as a clear witness to Peter's belief in His real pre-incarnate existence. The A.V., unlike almost all other Versions, curiously renders the participle 'manifested' here by the adjective 'manifest.'—**at the end of the times**. So we should read, with the best authorities, instead of 'in these last times.' The present time, the interval between Christ's two comings, is the end of the times as being the period beyond which there is to be no new revelation of grace. It is Christ's first advent that has made the present time the last.—**on account of you**. The preciousness of the redemption has been carefully set forth by four different definitions of its cost which have risen in a climax from the simple notice of blood, to that of blood with all the value arising from the ethical quality of Him who shed it, to that of Christ's blood, and finally to that of the blood of the Christ who was eternally in God's view as the Ransom. A fresh wonder is added to it now by these words, which bring it home personally to the readers, and show the interest of degraded Gentiles, such as they, to have been contemplated by it all.

Ver. 21. **Who through him have faith toward God.** The better accredited reading replaces the participle which the A. V. renders 'who believe' by the adjective 'believing,' or 'faithful,' which is elsewhere used of having faith in the promises of God (Gal. iii. 9), in Jesus as the Messiah and Author of salvation (Acts xvi. 1; 2 Cor. vi. 15; 1 Tim. v. 16), and in the fact of His resurrection (John xx. 27). The object of the belief is elsewhere expressed by the simple dative (Acts xvi. 15, etc.), or by the preposition 'in' (Eph. i. 1), but here by the preposition 'toward.' This more forcible phrase, therefore, exhibits the readers not merely as believing, but as raised to the condition of a settled and loyal faith, and as having God Himself, and nothing lower, for the object of this new conviction. And it is 'through Him,' as Peter emphatically reminds them, that they have this new faith. Christ, and only Christ, by all that He had taught and all that He had been on earth, was the means of leading them to this knowledge of God and trust in God. The description loses most of its point and pertinency if Gentiles are not allowed to be in view here. It might be said of Jews, indeed, that they were brought by Christ to a better faith in God, but only of Gentiles, that they owed it to Him that they had ever come to take God as the object of their trust. Thus, too, the connection between this sentence and the preceding becomes natural and weighty. The fact that these Gentiles, once 'without God and without hope in the world,' had been brought through Christ to know God, and rest their faith in Him, is a witness to the truth of Peter's statement that even they were in God's view when the Christ, who had been eternally before His mind as Ransom, was manifested in time.—**who raised him from the dead**: Peter repeats here what he had urged with such emphasis so soon after Christ's departure (Acts ii. 24, iii. 15, 26), and had proclaimed as the fulfilment of prophecy (Acts ii. 31-36). Compare also Paul's repeated ascription of Christ's resurrection to God's act (Eph. i. 20; Gal. i. 1; 2 Cor. iv. 14; Rom. iv. 24, viii. 11, etc.).—**and gave him glory**. The consistency of this with Peter's own earliest teaching (Acts ii. 36) is apparent. Its consistency with Paul's view of the 'name which is above every name' as a *gift* from God (Phil. ii. 9), and with Christ's own prayer for a glorification at His Father's hand, puts it out of the question to suppose (as some argue) that Peter's view of the Person of his Lord was less exalted than Paul's, or that he thought of any other subordination of Christ to God than the voluntary subordination, compatible with equality, which the Son assumed, and for which He received reward from the Father, as the apostles consistently teach, and as Christ Himself taught them when He spoke of the Father as *giving* Him all judgment (John v. 22), giving His work and His words (John xvii. 4, 8), His glory and even His life (John xvii. 22, v. 26). It is not without reason that the new Centre now found for the faith which had been wasted, ere they knew Christ, on the things of a life of vanity, is designated here, not merely as 'God,' nor even as 'the true God,' but as the God who raised and glorified Christ Himself. That reason, however, lies neither in the idea that it was not the visibly Incarnate Christ (whom these Gentiles had not seen indeed), but only the exalted Christ that could work this faith in them, nor in the idea that faith is not Christian faith unless it embraces this belief in God's having raised and glorified the Crucified (so Huther), but in what is next to be said of a hope to which this new faith rises.—**so that your faith should also be hope toward God**. The point of the statement which is placed so forcibly at the end of the section is apt to be missed. To render it, '*that your faith and hope might be in God*' (so Luther, Calvin, Beza, etc., and among Versions the Syriac, Vulgate, A. V., and R. V.), or 'so that your faith and hope are directed toward God' (so many interpreters), is to bring the 'hope' in as little more than a rhetorical appendix to the 'faith,' and to make Peter close so rich a paragraph with a bald repetition of what has been already stated in the clause, 'who through Him have faith toward God.' It overlooks also the peculiar arrangement of the Greek words, and strips the definition of God as the God who raised and glorified Christ of its pertinency. The sentence becomes a still balder repetition of what has been already stated, if (which both the A. V. and R. V. avoid, but most interpreters adhere to) the rendering, 'so that . . . *are* in

God,' is followed. It is doubtful, however, whether the Greek phrase so rendered ever loses the idea of *purpose*, even where it may seem to deal with *result*. Taking the 'hope,' therefore, to be predicate to the 'faith,' we should translate 'that your faith should also be (as indeed it is) hope toward God.' We have thus a new idea added to the previous train, and see how each of the prior clauses makes its own distinct contribution. Christ's death delivered them from the slavery of their vain life. Christ's manifestation was the means of lifting them to a faith of which God Himself, whom otherwise they would not have known, became the Object. Christ's resurrection opened the gates of the future, and gave them a new hope, which also had God for its Object. And in raising Christ from the dead, and giving Him glory, God had it in view to make them what they now are, children of hope as well as faith, and to raise them not merely to faith, but to a faith rich in hope, to a faith which should now be hope in Himself. What this God whom they now believed in had done in Christ's case woke in them the certain hope of a future in which He would give them joy over the 'heaviness' and 'manifold temptations' of the present. And this, too, was a reason why they should live their present life in holy fear, lest they might come short of what God intended for them!

CHAPTER I. 22–25.

Exhortation to Brotherly Love heartfelt, and without reserve.

22 SEEING ye have[1] [a]purified your souls in [b]obeying[2] the [c]truth through the Spirit[3] unto [d]unfeigned [e]love of the brethren,[4] *see that ye* love one another with a [f]pure heart
23 [g]fervently:[5] being [h]born again,[6] not of [i]corruptible [k]seed, but of [l]incorruptible, by[7] the word of God, which [m]liveth and
24 abideth for ever.[8] For [n]all flesh *is* as [o]grass, and all the glory of man[9] as the[10] [p]flower of grass. The grass [q]withereth, and
25 the flower thereof[11] falleth away:[12] but the [r]word of the Lord [s]endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the [t]gospel is[13] preached unto you.

[a] Jo. xi. 55; Acts xxi. 24, 26, xxiv. 18; Jas iv. 8; 1 Jo. iii. 3.
[b] Cf. refs. at ver. 14
[c] Rom. ii. 8; Gal. v. 7; Col. i. 5; Eph. i. 13; Heb. x. 26; 1 Tim. ii. 2, 15; 2 Tim. ii. 25, iii. 7, etc.
[d] Rom. xii. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 6; 1 Tim. i. 5; 2 Tim. i. 5; Jas. iii. 17.
[e] Ch. ii. 17. iii. 8; 2 Pet. i. 7; Rom. xii. 10; 1 Thes. iv. 9. [f] Cf. Mk. xii. 30, 33; Rom. vi. 17. [g] Acts xii. 5; Joel i. 14; Jon. iii. 8. [h] Cf. on ver. 3. [i] Cf. on ver. 18. [k] 2 Kings xix. 29. Cf. 1 Macc. x. 30. [l] Cf. on ver. 4. [m] Cf. on ver. 3. [n] Mat. xxiv. 22; Jo. xvii. 2; Isa. xl. 6. [o] Jas. i. 10, 11; Ps. ciii. 15. [p] Jas. i. 10, 11; Ps. ciii. 15. [q] Cf. Mat. xiii. 6; Ezek. xvii. 24. [r] Rom. x. 8; Heb. vi. 5; Josh. xxi. 43; Zech. i. 13. [s] Jo. viii. 35, xii. 34; 2 Cor. ix. 9; Heb. vii. 24; 1 Jo. ii. 17; Ps. cxxi. 9. [t] Ch. iv. 6; Lu. xvi. 16; 2 Cor. x. 16; Gal. i. 11; 1 Thes. ii. 9; Heb. ii. 3, iv. 2.

[1] Having [2] in the obedience of [3] *omit* through the Spirit
[4] *literally*, unto brotherly love unfeigned
[5] from the heart love one another intensely [6] having been begotten again
[7] through [8] God's living word and abiding
[9] *read* of it *for* of man, *or translate*, and all its glory [10] *omit* the
[11] *omit* thereof [12] *literally*, withered was the grass, and the flower fell away
[13] was

The exhortation to brotherly love, which is next introduced, is not without a living connection with the preceding. The circumspect walk which has been enjoined is a walk such as befits those who are travelling toward a home which it would be misery to miss, and are conscious of what it cost to redeem them. But a walk so recommended leads naturally to brotherly love. If they are sojourners together in an alien community, all the less should they think of falling out by the way. If they are redeemed together by the same great price, all the more should they take a common interest in the household of faith. The terms in which this counsel is given contain nothing to warrant the supposition that Peter had to deal with dissensions which had burst out between Jew and Gentile in these scattered churches. The trying circumstances of the churches may have been sufficient occasion for the counsel. Times of fear and threatening develop latent selfishness, and provoke hardness of feeling toward others. The injunction, however, is not merely to brotherly love, but, as if that might be taken for granted as existent, to a brotherly love of a particular kind and measure. As he has already urged those who were born anew into hope to set their hope intensely on its proper object (ver. 13), so now he urges those whom grace inspired with the new spirit of brotherly love to let it be earnest and unreserved. And this duty, like the previous duties, is shown to rise naturally out of the prior gift of God, His gift of a new life through the great deed of regeneration.

Ver. 22. **Having purified your souls.** The verb translated 'purified' is one which occurs only seven times in the New Testament. It is of frequent occurrence, however, in the Old, being the technical term used by the Greek Version for the ceremonial purification of the priests in preparation for Divine service, and applied also to the ceremonial 'sanctification' of the people (Josh. iii. 5, etc.), to the 'separation' from wine and strong drink which the Nazarite vow involved (Num. vi. 2–6), etc. In four out of the seven New Testament occurrences (John xi. 55; Acts xxi. 24, 26, xxiv. 18), it has the religious or ceremonial sense which it invariably has in the Old Testament. In the present passage, as well as in Jas. iv. 8, and 1 John iii. 3, it has the ethical sense (expressed also by another verb, *e.g.* in Acts xv. 9), although the original idea of a religious consecration or separation also adheres to it. What it implies, therefore, is a moral purification from everything inconsistent with a religious destination. And the subject of this is 'your souls,' the word 'soul' having here the sense of the 'region of the feelings, affections, and impulses, of all that peculiarly individualizes and personifies' (Ellicott). The purification is to go, therefore, to the very 'centre of the personal life,' and to purge out there the selfishness that is inconsistent with their Divine destination. And this is represented as the moral condition on which the fulfilling of the precept necessarily depends. This seems to be the point of the participle which, being in the perfect, exhibits the purification neither under the aspect of a process which must be continually sustained (so Calvin, the Vulgate, etc., deal with it as if it were a present), nor under that of a thing made good once for all at the crisis of conversion and now taken as the ground for the exhortation (so Bengel, Wiesinger, the 'seeing that' of the E. V., etc., as if the tense had been the simple narrative past). It is intimately connected with the following imperative. Yet neither so as to become itself an imperative co-ordinate with that (Luther, etc.), nor as denoting what must always be attended to whenever effect is to be given to the charge (Schott, Huther, etc.), but either as pointing to the fact that 'faith even in its first actings had purified, and in its continuous exercise was still purifying their souls' (Lillie), or as simply indicating a mental preparation which they are instructed to attend to as the *sine quâ non* to their observance of the charge. This last brings out best the marked difference between the tense of the participle and the tense of the imperative, and gives the pertinent idea, that in order to exhibit the acts of love of the kind here enjoined on all the particular occasions which may arise for them, they must first see to have the disposition of love—the disposition of souls cleansed of selfishness.—**in the obedience of the truth.** The same term (a peculiarly New Testament term, unknown to classical Greek, and occurring only once in the Greek Version of the Old Testament) for 'obedience' is used here as in vers. 2, 14, and is not to be identified with faith, but taken in the sense of obedience to God's will, and specially to that will as revealed in Christ. 'Truth,' too, has here the objective sense of the contents of the Christian revelation, or the Christian salvation itself; 'so far as being an unique and eternal reality, it has become manifest, and is set forth as the object of knowledge or faith' (Cremer). Subjection, therefore, to the permanent realities of grace, or to the saving will of God as revealed in Christ, is here the sphere or element in which alone this purified disposition at the very centre of the personal life can be attained. The best authorities are at one in regarding the clause, 'through the Spirit,' which the E. V. inserts, as no part of the original text.—**unto brotherly love unfeigned.** The 'unto' may express either the end or object which the purification aims at, or the result it actually reaches. The latter is more appropriate here, the idea being that if they have been so purified, they cannot fail to have the disposition here in view. The purification implies, the creation of a disposition which is alien to all love that is unreal or selfish. The term for 'brotherly love' is of less frequent occurrence in the New Testament than might be expected, being confined to the writings of Peter (here and in 2 Pet. i. 7) and Paul (Rom. xii. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 9), and the Epistle to the Hebrews (xiii. 1). Under various forms of expression, however, a large place is given by the New Testament writers, on the basis of Christ's own teaching (John xiii. 31), to the peculiar love which Christians are to cherish to each other. While Peter and Paul, however, exhibit it in its more general aspects, as an active grace taking shape in deeds of self-sacrifice, and as in some respects secondary to the wider grace of charity, it is John who specially unfolds it in the grandeur and newness which the new motive drawn from Christ's love, and the new standard presented in Christ's example, give to brotherly love. It is here described as 'unfeigned,' not hypocritical or wearing a mask, as the term implies. For, as Leighton puts it, 'men are subject to much hypocrisy this way, and deceive themselves; if they find themselves diligent in religious exercises, they scarce once ask their hearts how they stand affected this way, namely, in love to their brethren.'—**from the heart love one another intensely.** That is, see that ye have the purified personality which comes by receiving what God has revealed in Jesus Christ; and having the disposition of unfeigned brotherly love which that purification creates, let it display itself heartily, and without hesitation or hindrance, in acts of love to your fellow-believers. The phrase 'from the heart' (the adjective 'pure,' inserted by the E. V., is better omitted, the sentence being on the whole adverse to its genuineness) is to be attached not to the previous clause, but to the 'love one another,' and expresses one quality of the affection, its spontaneousness (Rom. vi. 17) and sincerity; 'let the clearness of the stream that brightens and gladdens the scenes of your daily intercourse attest the purity of the fountain whence it flows' (Lillie). The adverb 'fervently' (an adverb of degree, not of time, meaning, therefore, more than merely 'continuously') adds the note that it is to be with strained energies, as Huther, etc. put it; or 'unfalteringly,' as Humphrey suggests. Here, therefore, as elsewhere, Peter speaks of the degree of grace (cf. 2 Pet. iii. 18). But while he limits himself here to the measure which brotherly love should itself attain, the Second Epistle (i. 7) represents brotherly love as rather a step in a

gradation of which charity is the height. So Paul (1 Thess. iii. 12) urges an increase and abounding in love, not merely in the form of brotherly love, but as if the one, so far from arresting, promoted the other, in the larger form of a love embracing all men.

Ver. 23. Being born again, or rather, having been begotten again. On this see also ver. 3. The tense denotes a subsisting state due to an act in the past, and, therefore, here a new life in which they stand in virtue of a decisive change equivalent to a new birth. If the three verses which follow are regarded, as they are by almost all interpreters, as making one paragraph with the preceding verse, they must be understood to enforce the exhortation to a sincere and intense brotherly love. There is some difficulty, however, in establishing a sufficient connection, specially in view of the fact that there is no reference to community of life as the consequence of regeneration, but only a reference to the nature of the life which comes from an incorruptible source, through a Word which has the qualities of life and permanence. This being the case, and the injunction to brotherly love, as given in ver. 22, being complete within itself, it is suggested to connect vers. 23–25 with ii. 1–3. We should then have an exhortation (in ii. 1–3) to a right use of God's Word, based here on the consideration (thrown forward, as is the case with so many of Peter's counsels, before the charge itself) that it is to that Word that we owe our new life. The run of thought then would be clear and simple—ye are possessors now of a new life which, in contrast with the transitoriness of the natural life and its glory, is an incorruptible, permanent life; but this you owe to the power of God's living and abiding Word; therefore use that Word well, feed on it, nourish your life by it. Following the usual connection, we shall have to regard the previous exhortation to a brotherly love of a pure and whole-hearted order as now supported by the consideration that, in virtue of God's act of regeneration, 'there is the same blood running in their veins' (Leighton, and virtually Schott), or that the regeneration, which alone makes this kind of love a possibility, also makes it an obligation (Huther, etc.). Or better (with Weiss and, so far, Alford), we shall have to suppose that Peter now finds a further reason for holding themselves pledged to a life of love of this tenor, in a fact of grace of earlier date than even the purification of soul already instanced, namely, the decisive deed of God's grace in bringing them first into the new life by the instrumentality of His Word. The special qualities of the instrument of their regeneration, namely those of 'living' and 'abiding,' are then named as arguments for rising to that high strain of persevering, undeeaying love which befits a life which itself is lifted above the inconsistency, fitfulness, and perishableness of the natural life.—not of (or, from) corruptible seed, but incorruptible. The preposition denotes the source or origin of the life, and declares it to be in that respect unlike the natural life. The latter originates in what is perishable, and is itself, therefore, transitory and changeful. The former originates in what is incorruptible, and therefore is itself unsusceptible of failure or decadence. The word here translated 'seed' occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is taken in that sense by almost all commentators, and this seems to be favoured by the qualifying adjective attached to it. Neither is that a sense absolutely strange. It is found, though with extreme rarity, both in the classics and elsewhere (2 Kings xix. 29; 1 Macc. x. 30). The word, however, would mean naturally 'sowing,' which sense (along with the secondary meanings of 'seed-time' and 'offspring') it has in the Classics. Here, therefore, it refers to the Divine act, described as a begetting, which is the point of origin for the new life.—through God's living and abiding Word. There is a change in the preposition now, of which some strange explanations are given. It is not because Peter now passes from the figure to a literal designation of the medium of regeneration (Schott, Weiss, etc.), nor because the Word of God is now to be distinguished as a regenerating instrument from the Spirit of God implied in the foregoing 'seed' as the regenerating power in the Word (de Wette, Brückner), nor is it even to mark out two different aspects of the same Word, namely the Word as external instrumentality in the production of the new life, and the Word (in the character of 'seed') as internal principle of the new life (Huther). It is due simply to the fact, that having named the act of God, which is the originating power, Peter now names the medium through which that takes effect (cf. Jas. i. 18). The *Logos* or 'Word' by which God begets us is neither the Personal Word, Christ, by whom God has spoken finally, nor the written Word, the 'Scripture,' with which Paul opens his quotations, but, as in Heb. iv. 12, Revelation, or the declared will of God, and here that will as declared specially in the Gospel. Though the Word of God does not assume in Peter the form to which John carries it, it may yet be fairly said that it is 'more here than any written book, more than any oral teaching of the Gospel, however mighty that teaching might be in its effects' (Plumptre). The context shows Peter to be viewing it as a voice which penetrates man's nature like a quickening principle, 'a Divine, eternal, creative power, working in and on the soul of man' (Plumptre), and nearly identified with God Himself, just as in Heb. iv. there is an immediate transition from the Word (ver. 12) to God Himself (ver. 13). It is not quite clear which of the two subjects, God or the Word, is qualified by the adjectives 'living' and 'abiding.' The order in the Greek is peculiar, the noun 'God's' being thrust in between the two adjectives. Most interpreters agree with the E. V. in taking the Word to be the subject described here as 'living' and 'abiding,' in favour of which it is strongly urged that the passage which follows from the Old Testament deals not with God's own nature, but with that of His Word. The peculiar order of the Greek is then explained as due to the quality 'living' being thrown forward for the sake of emphasis. On this view the thing most decidedly asserted is the *life* which inheres in the Word, and the subsequent citation from Isaiah would be introduced to express the contrast between the Word of God in this respect and the best of all natural things. The arrangement of the terms points, however, more naturally to God as the subject described by the epithets, and in support of this, Dan. vi. 26 is appealed to, where God is similarly described, and, indeed,

according to one of the ancient Greek translators, in precisely the same terms. Calvin, therefore, supported by the Vulgate, and followed by some good exegetes, prefers the view that these epithets 'living' and 'abiding' are given here to God Himself, with reference to His Word, as that in which 'His own perpetuity is reflected as in a living mirror.' In this case we should have the same kind of connection between God and His Word as we have also in Heb. ii. 12, 13, where the conception of the former as having all things naked and opened to Him, and that of the latter as quick, powerful, and piercing, lie so near each other; and the following citation would have the more distinct design of affirming the Word to be partaker of the very life and perpetuity which inhere in God Himself. In either case the quality of 'abiding' is not a mere superaddition (as Huther, etc., make it), but rather so weighty an inference from the 'living' that it alone is expounded in what follows. For the dominant idea is still the kind of love which believers should exhibit toward each other, namely, persevering, lasting love, and the general intention of the closing verses is to show that while to the unregenerate all that is possible may be a love changeful and transient like the nature of which it is born, the regenerate are made capable of, and thereby pledged to, a love of the enduring quality of that new life which, like God Himself and God's Word, lives and therefore abides. The words 'for ever' are omitted by the best authors.

Ver. 24. **For all flesh is as grass.** Peter breaks off into the rapid, vivid terms in which the prophet of Isa. xl. speaks of his commission. 'The air is full of inspiration, of Divine calls and prophetic voices' (M. Arnold). The prophet hears a voice say to him, Cry; he asks what he shall cry, and the voice gives him as his cry this 'antithesis between the decay—it may be the premature decay (for the breath of Jehovah "bloweth" *when* "it listeth")—to which even the brightest and best of earthly things are liable, and the necessary permanence of Jehovah and His revelation' (Cheyne). The particular revelation or 'word' there affirmed to stand infallibly for ever is God's promise regarding Israel. Here that is identified with the word now preached through the Gospel. The phrase 'all flesh' (which in the Old Testament is characteristic of certain books only, occurring, *e.g.*, repeatedly in the Pentateuch and the *second* half (never in the first) of Isaiah, four times in Jeremiah, three times in Ezekiel, once in Zechariah) embraces man and all that is of man as he is by nature.—**and all its glory as flower of grass.** The reading followed by the E. V., 'the glory of man,' must yield to the better reading, 'its glory.' If the 'flesh,' therefore, is compared to grass (a familiar biblical figure of transient human life, cf. Ps. xc. 5, 6, ciii. 15, 16; Job viii. 12, xiv. 2; Isa. xxxvii. 27, l. 12; Jas. vii. 10, 11), and one to which the rapidity of growth and decay in Eastern climates gives additional force, the 'glory' of the flesh, by which is meant its goodliest outcome, 'the most splendid manifestations of man's life,' is compared to the still more tender bloom that brightens on the flower only to fall off. 'There are no fields of amaranth on this side of the grave; there are no voices, O Rhodopè, that are not soon mute, however tuneful; there is no name, with whatever emphasis of passionate love repeated, of which the echo is not faint at last' (Landor).—**withered was the grass, and the flower** (the word '*thereof*' is not sustained by the best authorities) **fell off.** A lifelike picture of the actual occurrence, the tenses used being those of direct narration (aptly given by Wycliffe—**dried up. . . . fell down**), which may be rendered, as in the E. V., by our English present, as expressing what takes place habitually, but which rather represent the thing as witnessed by the eye of the reporter.—**But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.** Having the Gospel immediately in view, Peter substitutes 'the word of the *Lord*' here for 'the word of our God,' which is the phrase in Isa. xl. 8, in both the Hebrew text and the Greek. Other departures from the Old Testament passage, as we have it, also appear, some of which are of minor interest, others of a remarkable kind. Not only is the qualifying 'as' introduced before the 'grass,' the stronger term 'glory' given for 'goodliness,' the phrase 'flower of grass' substituted for 'flower of the field,' and 'fadeth' displaced by 'fell off,' but the important section of the Hebrew text which ascribes the decadence of grass and flower to the Spirit of the Lord blowing upon them (ver. 7) is entirely omitted. In these particulars, Peter follows the text of the ancient Greek translation. On the other hand, he departs from the Greek text, and returns to the Hebrew, in adopting 'all *its* glory' instead of 'all the glory *of man*.' It appears, therefore, that Peter makes a very free quotation, or rather, that he does not bring in this passage as a formal quotation sustaining his statement by an appeal to Scripture, but simply expresses in Old Testament words which come easily to his lips a reason for the incorruptibility which he attributes to the new life, namely, that it is due to the action of a power which endures like God Himself. This is supported by the fact that the passage is introduced not by the ordinary conjunction 'for,' but by a different term, used also in ver. 16, meaning rather 'because.'—**And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you,** or rather, **and the word of the gospel which was preached unto you was this.** The sentence is not parallel, as it is taken by many, to Rom. x. 5-13, where the *nearness* or *accessibility* of the Word is in view. What is affirmed is not that this Word, of which things so glorious are said, is yet so near them as to be at their hand in the Gospel, but that the good tidings which were brought to these Asiatic Christians by Paul and his comrades were nothing else than that Word of the Lord of which the prophet spake, and nothing less enduring than the Voice of the desert had proclaimed that Word to be. So Peter identifies the revelation in the form of the ancient word of promise with the revelation in the form of the recent word of preaching; which he says, also, was not merely *to* them, or for their benefit, but *unto* them, addressed to them personally and borne in among them. He gives implicit witness at the same time to the fact that what he himself had now to teach them was nothing but the same grace which Paul and others had proclaimed. Hence the past tense, '*was* preached,' as referring to their first acquaintance with the Gospel, when others than he who wrote to them had been the means of conveying to them the Lord's enduring Word, and thus creating in them a life capable of

a stedfast and undecaying love. The term used for the 'Word' in ver. 23 (*Logos*) gives place now to a different term (*rhema*), which is supposed to express only the word as uttered (while the other denotes the word whether uttered or unuttered), and to give a more concrete view of it. How far the distinction can be carried out, however, is doubtful. And it is more than doubtful whether in the present instance the change is due to aught else than the fact that the Greek translation which Peter seems to follow uses the latter word in the passage cited.

CHAPTER II. 1-3.

Exhortation to live on the Word with a view to Growth in Grace.

1 WHEREFORE, [a] laying aside [1] all [b] malice, and all [c] guile,
and [d] hypocrisies, and [e] envies, and all [f] evil-speakings,
2 as new-born [g] babes, [h] desire [2] the sincere [i] milk of the [k] word,[3]
3 that ye may [l] grow thereby: [4] [m] if so be ye have [n] tasted [5] that
the Lord *is* [o] gracious.[6]

[a] Acts vii. 28; Rom. xiii. 12; Eph. iv. 22, 25; Col. iii. 8; Jas. i. 21; Heb. xii. 1.
[b] Mat. vi. 34; Acts viii. 22; Rom. i. 29; 1 Cor. v. 8, xiv. 20; Eph. iv. 31; Col. iii. 8; Tit. iii. 3; 1 Pet. ii. 16.
[c] Mat. xxvi. 4; Mk. vii. 22, xiv. 1; Jo. i. 47; Rom. i. 29; 2 Cor. xii. 16; 1 Thes. ii. 3; 2 Pet. ii. 22, iii. 10.
[d] Mat. xxiii. 28; Mk. xii. 15; Lu. xii. 1; Gal. ii. 13; 1 Tim. iv. 2.
[e] Mat. xxvii. 18; Mk. xv. 10; Rom. i. 29; Gal. v. 21; Phil. i. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 4; Tit. iii. 3; Jas. iv. 5.
[f] 2 Cor. xii. 20.
[g] Lu. i. 41, 44, ii. 12, 16, xviii. 15; Acts vii. 19; 2 Tim. iii. 15.
[h] 2 Cor. v. 2, ix. 14; Rom. i. 11; Phil. i. 8, ii. 26; 1 Thes. iii. 6; 2 Tim. i. 4; Jas. iv. 5.
[i] 1 Cor. iii. 2, ix. 7; Heb. v. 12, 13.
[k] Rom. xii. 2.
[l] 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7; 2 Cor. ix. 10, 15; Col. i. 6, 10; 2 Pet. iii. 18.
[m] Rom. viii. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 15; 2 Thes. i. 6.
[n] Ps. xxxiii. 8; Prov. xxxi. 18; Heb. ii. 9, vi. 4, 5.
[o] Mat. xi. 30; Lu. v. 35, 39; Rom. ii. 4; Eph. iv. 32.

[1] Having put off, therefore
[2] long for (*as in R. V.*), *or*, earnestly desire
[3] the spiritual milk which is without guile (*as in R. V.*), *or literally*, the rational, guileless milk
[4] therein, *or*, in it. *Also add* unto salvation
[5] if indeed ye tasted
[6] good

The duty which is next to be urged is introduced by 'wherefore,' and is thus given as one which follows naturally upon what has just been stated. The pulse of two thoughts, which have ruled the preceding section, beats in this new paragraph—that of brotherly love and that of the new birth. Of these the second is the more prominent, the immediate link of connection being between the 'born again' of i. 23 and the 'new-born babes' of ii. 2. The fact that these converts live a new life, which they owe to an incorruptible Source, is an argument for cherishing the life so that it may grow and develop all its gracious capacities. The fact that this new life has come to them through the medium of the enduring Word of God, which has made it the recipient of its own qualities, is an argument for making that Word, as in the Gospel it is preached to them, their soul's very food. But if the life is of the high strain which should expand into a brotherly love as constant and undecaying as natural affection is apt to prove transient and fickle, growth in this life implies the renouncing of every base feeling, word, and act. The things which are to be put away are things inconsistent at once with brotherly love, with a right use of the Word, and with growth unto final salvation. They are unlovely dispositions of the old nature, which form the common temptation of all Christians, and the special note of no single class or nationality. They cannot be said to 'point, especially in the hypocrisies and "evil-speakings," to the besetting sins of the Jewish rather than the Gentile character, as condemned by our Lord (Matt. xxiii. *et al.*) and St. James (iii. iv.)' (Dean Plumptre). Paul's handling of the 'backbitings' among the Corinthians (2 Cor. xii. 20), and the 'dissimulations' among the Galatians (Gal. ii. 13), is enough to show the precariousness of any such limited application. Paul's letter to the churches of one of the territories here addressed by Peter, discovers conditions out of which evils like those which are repudiated here very readily sprang. His letters to the Ephesians and Colossians recognise similar roots of bitterness at work there. And it is probable enough that what operated to this effect in the churches of Ephesus, Colosse, and Galatia, existed in some degree in the churches of the other territories. The evils which are to be renounced are evils which crush out love and create dissension among men. So Peter passes easily through what he says here of the need of putting away such elements of division to what he has next to say of what believers ought to be as a united body, and how the aim set before them is to build up a spiritual house for their Lord, so that His Church may be carried to her completion.

Ver. 1. **Having put off.** The noun connected with this verb is used by Peter in the *caveat* which he throws in on the subject of the antitypical relation of the waters of baptism to those of the flood, where he explains that what he has in view is 'not the putting away of the filth of the flesh' (iii. 21). The verb itself occurs both in the Pauline writings (Rom. xiii. 12) and in others (Heb. xii. 1; Jas. i. 21) with the figurative sense, taken from the act of putting off or laying aside clothes (cf. Acts viii. 58), and is employed in Paul's two great statements regarding the 'putting

off' which is involved in the 'putting on' of the 'new man' (Eph. iv. 24, 25; Col. iii. 8, 10). The vices to be renounced, therefore, are compared implicitly to a foul garment enwrapping the old man. They are the 'Nessus shirt' of corrupt habits which the new man tears off. This divestiture is represented here (the participle being in the simple past) as preparatory to, and the condition of, the fulfilment of the positive charge which follows.—**therefore**, *i.e.* =having by help of the Word an undying life capable of an undecaying love, forswear everything hostile to the life, and by a right use of the Word foster it till it grows to the perfection of final salvation.—**all** (or, *every kind of*) **malice**. The noun (which in the Septuagint, *e.g.* Amos iii. 6; Eccles. vii. 14, xii. 1; and once in the N. T., Matt. vi. 34, has also the objective sense of calamity or trouble) may mean either *wickedness*, *viciousness*, in general (as in 1 Cor. v. 8, xiv. 20; Acts viii. 22), or, in particular (as in Rom. i. 29; Eph. iv. 31; Col. iii. 8; Tit. iii. 3; Jas. i. 21), *malevolence, the wish to injure*. On the ground of its apparent import in ver. 16, some give it the former sense here, in which case it would be the parent disposition, of which the things which follow are the issue. The latter sense, however, is favoured both by the repetition of the 'all' with the 'guile' (which would give us a second generalization), by the analogy of Eph. iv. 31, Col. iii. 8, Jas. i. 21, and by the relation of the whole sentence to the previous charge to brotherly love. The 'wickedness' which the R. V. places in the text, therefore, should go to the margin, and its marginal 'malice' should occupy the text.—**and all guile**, *i.e.* every form of the disposition to reach selfish ends artfully or by deception. In iii. 10 this is re-introduced in relation to speech, as that is dealt with in Ps. xxxiii. 13.—**and hypocrisies and envies**. The transition to the plural indicates perhaps that acts are now in view, the unlovely acts which arise in those dispositions of malice and guile. These 'hypocrisies' are in strong contrast to the love 'unfeigned,' literally 'unhypocritical,' in i. 22. The word (which is used in Gal. ii. 13 with the softened sense of the dissimulation of Cephas and the Jews, which amounted to a 'practical denial of their better insight') covers here all the insincerities, the masked acts and concealments into which the heart full of malice and guile drives one in relation to his fellows. The 'envies' (the only vice in this list which is explicitly named in Paul's enumeration of the 'works of the flesh,' Gal. v. 20, 21) embrace all exhibitions of jealousy and grudging.—**and all evil-speakings**. The term is one of rare occurrence. The cognate verb, indeed, is found occasionally in the Classics, and there with the twofold sense of 'babbling' and 'railing.' But the noun itself is unknown to classical Greek, although it is found occasionally in the Septuagint (Wisdom i. 11), the Fathers (*e.g.* Clem. Rom. and Polycarp), and in one other passage of the N. T. (2 Cor. xii. 20). It means literally 'speakings *against*,' and will include all words of detraction, railing, defamation, and the like. The five evils mentioned here may be antithetical to either of two things,—the brotherly love formerly in view, or the character implied in the immediately succeeding designation, 'new-born babes.' The close connection between the two parts of the verse, and the introduction of vices like *guile* and *hypocrisy*, which are more directly opposed to simplicity and sincerity than is love, favour the latter word. In that case, the point would be the renunciation of everything alien to child-like candour, to the transparency and healthfulness of the child-like character. The former view is generally preferred, however, and is supported by the prevalent tone of the evils specified, as well as by the relation of dependency in which this charge stands to the former. It is doubtful whether much is intended by the particular order in which the things are given. It is supposed, *e.g.*, that the malice comes first, as being 'the main cause of dissensions,' and that then we get naturally 'guile the inward disease, hypocrisy its outward manifestation, and, as a result of the consciousness of evil, envy in its various forms, specially directed against those who have the peace in which the hypocrite knows that he is lacking, a feeling which sooner or later breaks out in calumnious aspersions' (Canon Cook). But if any inner connection is to be traced at all, it is rather that the malice which purposes evil to a brother, is named first as at the root of all; that this carries with it the guile which schemes to accomplish the end; that the guile which secretly works by plot and artifice for the ends of self, reveals itself in the hypocrisies into which it is driven to deceive the eye; while the masked acts by which we painfully cover our assault upon a brother's good, exasperate our envyings of his good, and these find vent in evil-speakings or overt attempts to talk him down.

Ver. 2. **as new-born babes**. Of two words for child, one of which corresponds etymologically to our 'infant,' and means the child yet incapable of speech, and then more generally (as in Gal. iv. 1) a minor, the other the child at the stage of birth, or at the tenderest age (cf. Luke xviii. 15; Acts vii. 19), it is the latter that is used here, as it is also used of Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 15), and of the infant Jesus (Luke ii. 12, 16). It is not used, however, in the metaphorical sense in which the babe (as designated by the other word) in knowledge is contrasted with him who is of full age (Heb. v. 13), or the immature and carnal with the spiritual (1 Cor. iii. 1). It expresses a simple fact here, the recency of the Christian life in these converts, which is marked still more emphatically by the addition of the strong adjective (nowhere else used in the N. T.) 'new-born.' The contrast is not between Christians at different stages of Christian maturity, but between these converts as once they were and as now they have just come to be. And it is in this character (the 'as' here again being the note of quality or fact, not of comparison) that they are charged to **long for the pure, rational milk**. The verb (an intensive or compound form) means not merely 'desire' (as the E. V. renders it here, although elsewhere it deals better with its force, *e.g.* Rom. i. 11, 'long;' 1 Thess. iii. 6, 'desire greatly,' etc.), but 'earnestly desire,' or 'long for,' as with the keen and healthy appetite of the child, with whom it is so natural to turn to the 'food convenient' for it, that, as Bengel says, it is capable of nothing but this desire. It is difficult to convey the precise sense of the three words which follow. It is clear, however, that they describe the food for which these converts are to cultivate an appetite, and the E. V., though literally inexact, gives a

sufficiently correct representation of their general import by its rendering 'sincere milk of the word.' The term 'milk' here does not mean the elementary doctrine which is suitable for babes in Christ in contrast with the 'meat' (1 Cor. iii. 3), or the 'strong meat' (Heb. v. 12–14), which elsewhere is said to be for the full-grown. It is simply a figurative expression for the food which they must have, seeing that they are now in a new life. They themselves are not *compared* to babes, but said to *be* babes, as having been only recently ushered into the Christian life. And their food is not *compared* to milk, but said to *be* milk. But this is at once qualified by two adjectives which exhibit its nature. One of these is resolved into a noun, 'of the word,' by our E. V. and some other versions, as well as by Beza, Bengel, etc. This brings out the sense well enough, but is not itself a correct translation. What the food is which is indicated by the 'milk,' is not stated, but is left to be inferred from the context, which certainly points neither to the Eucharist, as some strangely imagine, nor even to Christ, as the Logos preached in the Word (so Weiss), but simply to the Word itself. And to make this plain, an adjective is attached which occurs often in the Classics, and in a variety of senses (*e.g.* belonging to speech, possessed of reason, logical, etc.), but in the N. T. is found only once again (Rom. xii. 1). In both its N. T. occurrences (and even in ecclesiastical Greek, the offering of the angels being described, *e.g.*, in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, as a 'rational and bloodless offering') it seems to mean rational, or spiritual (though these English words poorly express the idea), as opposed to literal or ceremonial. In the Pauline passage it designates the new sacrificial service to which the Christian is pledged by Christ's sacrifice, as one in which the mind is engaged, which cannot be discharged by the hand without the heart or as an *opus operatum* like the legal circumstantial service of the Jew. In the present passage it explains the 'milk' to be food for the soul, not for the body; spiritual milk for the spiritually new-born, not material milk as for the natural babe. But this is further defined by a second term, which signifies 'guileless,' and in which, therefore, there may be an echo of the 'all guile' of ver. 1. Two shades of meaning, however, are possible. If the figure of the 'milk' is regarded as sunk in the idea of the Word to which it points, the term will be rendered 'sincere' (as in E. V. and the Geneva Version), or 'without guile' (as in Wycliffe), or 'without deceit' (as in Cranmer; Tyndale gives 'without corruption'). The point then will be that the Word is pure, 'uncrafty' (as Jeremy Taylor puts it), incapable of deceiving or corrupting; with which may be compared the use of the cognate verb in 2 Cor. iv. 2, '*handling* the Word of God *deceitfully*.' If, as is more likely, the figure rules the term, it may be rendered *unadulterate;* free from any foreign element hurtful to the life; an analogy to which is found (see Lillie) in Shakespeare's 'the *innocent milk* in its most innocent mouth' (*Winter's Tale*, iii. 2).—**that ye may grow thereby.** The best authorities add here the important words, *unto salvation*, which carry these converts in thought at once from their present infancy in grace on to what they are designed to be in the ultimate manifestation of the sons of God. The unflagging spiritual appetite or 'longing' which is spoken of is to be cherished with this in view as its most proper object,—their own growth from strength to strength, until they reach the measure of final redemption. This increase will be secured, and that goal reached, only 'thereby,' or rather, 'therein;' that is, so far as the Word is made the mental food in which their new life instinctively seeks its nourishment, and made this with that great object in view. Any other use of the Word of God comes short of a worthy use. 'To desire it only for some present pleasure and delight that a man may find in it, is not the due use and end of it: that there is delight in it, may commend it to those who find it so, and so be a means to advance the end; but the end it is not. To seek no more but a present delight, that vanisheth but with the sound by the words that die in the air, is not to desire the Word as meat but as music' (Leighton).

Ver. 3. **if indeed ye tasted that the Lord is good.** A condition is added which represents the previous charge as one which is applicable indeed only to those who have a particular personal experience (expressed as *tasting*), but obviously applicable to such, and certain to recommend itself to them. The sentence puts the condition as one which may be held to be made good, =if, that is to say (and that I take for granted), ye tasted. The tense (a simple historical past, not 'have tasted,' as both A. V. and R. V. give it) describes the experience as one belonging definitely to the past, and points, therefore, to what they found the Lord to be when they first came to know Him. The adjective has not so specific a meaning (although it approaches that) as is implied in the 'gracious' by which both the A. V. and the R. V. render it. Neither has it here the sense of 'sweet,' as if the Lord Himself were viewed as the 'rational unadulterate milk,' and declared now to be as milk 'sweet' to the taste in the sense in which meats and drinks are pronounced 'sweet' or 'good.' It designates moral goodness under the twofold aspect of attractiveness and kindly disposition or active beneficence, as distinguished from other adjectives which describe goodness on the side of its sterling worth and its gentleness. The idea, therefore, is that if, as Peter assumed it to be the case, they had found Christ Himself to be good in their own first inward perception of what He was, they could not but hunger for that living Word of the Gospel by which they had received Him and life with Him, and make such use of it that their life should be a growing life and themselves children, dwelling in brotherly love, and advancing in meetness for the children's inheritance. It is not necessary (with many interpreters) to limit this goodness of the Lord to the active beneficence of which the providing of this preached Word was the special proof. The source of the verse shows the sense to be more general. For Peter seems to have in mind here the 34th Psalm, one of the eight Psalms which are referred by their inscriptions to the painful period of David's life during which he was a fugitive from Saul. The particular words which he reproduces are those in which the Psalmist calls on God's saints to make proof for themselves of that kindness of Jehovah which throws the shield of angelic protection round them,—words on account of which the early Church made this Psalm its Communion Psalm (see *Delitzsch in loc.*). In order to adapt it to

his present purpose, Peter makes certain changes on the sentence, dropping the imperative form, and giving the single term 'taste' instead of the two terms 'taste' and 'see,' by which the Psalm expresses the spiritual experience which leads to spiritual perception. And what is said of the Jehovah of the O. T., Peter applies thus to Christ without further qualification. If they had once tasted this goodness, they must have the appetite, and that would keep their life from being stunted. If they had once known what the Lord Himself is, they could not but long for that Word which is His preacher, that they might have an ever-deepening experience of His goodness.

CHAPTER II. 4–6.

Exhortation to Continuous Building on Christ, the Foundation.

4 TO whom [a] coming, *as unto* [1] a [b] living stone, [c] disallowed
indeed of men,[2] but chosen [d] of God,[3] *and* [4] precious,[5]
5 ye also, as [e] lively [6] stones, are [f] built up [7] a [g] spiritual house,
an holy [h] priesthood,[8] to [i] offer up [k] spiritual sacrifices, [l] accept-
6 able to God by Jesus Christ. [m] Wherefore also [9] it is [n] contained
in the scripture,[10] Behold, [o] I lay in Sion a [p] chief corner-stone,
[q] elect, [r] precious: [11] and he that [s] believeth on him [12] shall not
be [t] confounded.[13]

[a] Heb. iv. 16; 1 Kings xiv. 36; Jer. vii. 26.
[b] See refs. at i. 3.
[c] Ps. cxviii. 22; Mat. xxi. 42; Lu. ix. 22; Mk. xvii. 25; Heb. xii. 17.
[d] Ver. 20; ch. iii. 8; Jas. i. 17; Mat. xix. 26; Lu. ii. 52.
[e] Rom. vi. 11; 1 Cor. vi. 9; Gal. ii. 19.
[f] Acts ix. 31; 1 Cor. iii. 9. 16, viii. 1, 10, 23, xiv. 4, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 21; 1 Thes. v. 11.
[g] 1 Cor. x. 3, 4; Eph. i. 3; Col. i. 9, iii 16; Heb. iii. 6, x. 21; Mat. xxv. 21, 23
[h] Ver. 9; Ex. xix. 6.
[i] Ver. 24; Mat. xvii. 1; Lu. xxiv. 51; Heb. vii. 27, ix. 28, xiii. 15; Jas. ii. 27; Gen. viii. 20.
[k] See under (g).
[l] Rom. xv. 16, 31; 2 Cor. vi. 2, viii. 12.
[m] Ch i. 16, 24.
[n] Acts xxiii. 25; 1 Macc. xv. 2; 2 Macc. ix. 18, xi 16, 22. See also Lu. v. 9; 2 Macc. iv. 16.
[o] Isa. xxviii. 16.
[p] Eph. ii. 20.
[q] Ver. 4; Mat. xx. 16; Lu. xxiii. 35.
[r] Ver. 4; Lu. vii. 2, xiv. 8; Phil. ii. 29; 1 Kings xxvi. 21.
[s] Lu. xxiv. 25; Rom. ix. 33, x. 11; 1 Tim. i. 16.
[t] Rom. v. 5, ix. 33, x. 11; 1 Cor. i. 27.

[1] omit *as unto*
[2] *or*, by men indeed rejected
[3] *rather*, but with God elect
[4] omit *and*
[5] *or*, honourable, *as in margin of R. V.*
[6] living
[7] *or*, be ye also built up
[8] *rather*, for, *or*, with a view to an holy priesthood
[9] Because
[10] in Scripture, *or*, *as the margin of the R. V. gives it*, in a scripture
[11] *or*, honourable
[12] *or*, *with margin of R. V.*, on it
[13] *or*, *with R. V.*, put to shame

It is supposed by some (Schott, etc.) that the previous section has already had in view the future of the Church, and not of the mere individual, its import being that by a right use of the Word the members of the Church should increase in love as a brotherhood, and the Church itself advance towards its glorious end. In that case, the verses which now follow would be a mere extension of the former paragraph. Up to this point, however, Peter has dealt rather with what concerns the individual believer's own ripeness for the inheritance of the saints, and now he speaks of what relates to the realization of the idea of the collective body, the Church. With the change of view there comes a change of figure. The conception of a life growing passes over into that of a building increasing. At the same time the Word or Revelation, which is the means of the life with its growth, gives place to the Lord Himself, who is the foundation of the structure with its increase, and the idea of union with Christ Himself as the first and the last thing in the regenerate life, which was but dimly conveyed by the preceding statement, is now exhibited in all its breadth. The description which is now commenced of what believers are meant to be in their collective capacity as the Church of God, is continued for some time, and carried into the details of their relations to the ancient Church of God in Israel (vers. 7–10), to the world and civil society (11–17), and to various orders of life.

Ver. 4. **To whom coming.** The relative form of the sentence indicates its intimate connection with the previous section. The connection, however, is not between an exhortation and a statement of privilege appended in support of the exhortation, but between two exhortations which, while in themselves distinct, have a meeting-point in what is said of 'the Lord.' This verse, therefore, gives a further explanation of the primary condition of all growth, namely, union with this Lord Himself. They who have tasted that He is good have an irresistible attraction to Him, and it is by giving effect to this attraction that they grow. If the Church, too, is to increase into that which God means it to be, its members must not only feed upon the Word, but come constantly to Christ Himself. Though the verb by which this is expressed is the verb from which the word *proselyte* is derived, it is fanciful to suppose that Peter had in his mind anything relating to the modes of admission for Gentile converts into

Judaism. Neither is he alluding specially to service. It is held, indeed (*e.g.* by Schott), that Christ being represented here not as the source of the individual believer's life, but rather as the foundation of the structure which is being built up of many regenerate individuals, the 'coming' naturally refers neither to the first act of faith nor to the daily renewal of personal fellowship, but to the stated coming with all the powers of the regenerate life to Christ for purposes of service. The idea then would be that the giving of ourselves to Christ's service in the great work of rearing the spiritual temple is to be made our recognised mode of conduct. But the construction of the verb (which is unusual here) points rather to something more than a simple approach to one—to a close approach or intimate association; while the present tense describes that as a habit. The idea, therefore, is simply this—that the *upbuilding* of the Church on Christ the foundation can be made good only in so far as we, the builders, are ourselves ever coming into close personal union with the same Christ. The verb selected for the expression of this union, meaning as it does to attach one closely to an object, is in perfect harmony with the figure under which both Christ and believers are represented here.—**a living stone.** The E. V. inserts **as unto.** The original, however, is bolder. It has no such note of comparison, but designates the Lord directly **a living stone**; in which phrase the main thing, too, is the noun *stone*, not the qualifying adjective *living*. Christ is spoken of under the figure of a stone simply because in relation to the House He is the foundation; as believers are termed *stones*, because in relation to the same House they are in one point of view the materials to be used in building, while in another they are the builders. The word for *stone* here is an entirely different word from the term which is identical with the personal name Peter, and this prevents us from supposing (with Bengel, Canon Farrar, etc.) that the apostle was thinking here of the new name (Peter = rock or stone) which he had himself received from Christ. He uses the term simply as a well-understood Old Testament title of Messiah, as he uses it again in his discourse after the healing of the cripple (Acts iv. 11), and as Christ Himself employs it in order to point the application of the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 42). Peter, indeed, as some suppose, may have been that 'one of His disciples' who, as Jesus 'went out of the temple,' said unto him, 'Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here,' and who now pointed his readers to that Master Himself as the chief corner-stone of a more glorious temple slowly rising out of more imperishable material. The adjective 'living' is attached here, as it is also to the subsequent 'stones,' simply as a note of the figurative application of the noun. It does not refer to the Resurrection of Christ, neither does it express such ideas as that Christ became this 'living foundation' only through death, or that He lives to make others alive, or that 'He penetrates and fills with His life the whole organism of believers, and causes it to grow' (Fronmüller). Far less is the expression analogous to the phrase *living rock*, describing the stone in its natural state as distinguished from the stone broken and hewn.—**rejected indeed of men, but with God chosen, honourable.** There is no reference here to the Jews as distinguished from others. There is simply a broad contrast drawn between two kinds of treatment accorded to the 'living stone,' one on the side of men, and another on the side of God. It is much in Peter's habit to draw such contrasts (cf. Acts ii. 23, 24, iii. 13–15, iv. 10, v. 30, 31, x. 39, 40). Hence, too, instead of the 'builders' of Ps. cxviii. 22, we get the more general phrase 'men.' The verb which the E. V., following Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan Version, translates 'disallowed' here (as it does again in ver. 7, but nowhere else in the N. T.), conveys the stronger idea of rejection after trial, or on the ground of want of qualification. Here 'reproved' is given by Wycliffe, and 'reprobated' by the Rheims, and outside this Epistle the verb is invariably rendered 'reject' in the E. V. The value which the stone has in God's sight is expressed by two adjectives, one of which describes it as 'chosen' or 'elect' (*i.e.* chosen by God as qualified for His object); while the other describes it as consequently 'honourable,' or 'in honour' with Him as such (the term being somewhat different from the 'precious' in i. 19). Other epithets, which in Isa. xxviii. 16 are descriptive rather of what the stone is to be in the building than of what it is in God's estimate, are omitted.

Ver. 5. **Be ye also as living stones built up.** The verb admits of being construed either as indicative or as imperative. The former is preferred by the E. V., in which it follows Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Geneva. The same rendering is adopted by not a few of the best interpreters (Bengel, Wiesinger, Weiss, Hofmann, etc.), specially on the ground that what is stated in this verse and the following is a natural explanation of the practical effect to which that 'goodness of the Lord' which they had tasted (ver. 3) had served them for good, namely, in having actually made them, through attachment to Himself, parts of that spiritual edifice of which he is the foundation chosen of God. But the imperative is to be preferred (with Beza, de Wette, Luthardt, Huther, Schott, Alford, etc.), as most consistent with the use of the similar 'be ye' in i. 15, with the hortatory force which seems inherent in the participle 'coming' (ver. 4), and with Peter's practice of introducing charges in the form of imperatives accompanied by participles expressing the conditions of their fulfilment (i. 13, i. 17, 18, i. 22, ii. 1, 2). The imperative, too, may be of the middle form = build yourselves up (Luther, Steiger, Plumptre), or better, of the passive form = be ye built up, as the E. V. gives in the margin, here following Wycliffe's 'be ye above bilded,' and the 'be ye also yourselves superedified' of the Rheims. So Peter, as his wont is, charges them to do on their side what has been made both possible and a matter of duty by what has been done on God's side. The foundation is laid by God, let them come, therefore, and be built upon it. And the *character* (such again is the force of the 'as') in which they are to do this is that of *living* stones.—**a spiritual house.** Though the noun means simply 'house,' and not 'temple,' and the adjective 'spiritual' is added simply to distinguish it from a material structure, it is no doubt the temple that Peter has in view. The phrase itself may be in apposition to the subject 'ye' (Hofmann, etc.), or (as most prefer) it may

express the end contemplated in the being *built*. It may be that they are to be built up on the Foundation in the character of, or *because they are*, a spiritual house; or it may be rather that they are to be built up *in order to* make a spiritual house. At this point Peter introduces the idea which was so alien to the Jewish mind (cf. Mark xiv. 58; John ii. 21), but by this time as familiar to him as it was to Paul (Eph. ii. 20–22, etc.), that the real temple of God was not the great House in Jerusalem, and that Christ's flock, without distinction, too, of Jew and Gentile, was the true Israel, temple, and priesthood of God. It is possible, as Dean Plumptre and others believe, that in speaking of the Church in these terms, Peter recalled the great declaration made to him by Christ Himself, the full significance of which he had been slow enough to take in, on the subject of the Church, and the rock on which its Lord was to build it (Matt. xvi. 18). 'This thought of a Divine temple consisting of living men, and of a corner-stone by whom and in whom they could alone cohere, may be traced throughout the whole Epistle. From first to last he seems to be telling them of a unity which existed for them, and which they might enjoy in spite of their dispersion, if only they would recognise the living ground of it, if only they would move round the true centre, and not try to exist as separate atoms apart from it' (Maurice, *Unity of New Testament*, p. 336).—**unto (or, with a view to) a holy priesthood.** The evidence of the best authorities makes it necessary to insert the preposition 'unto,' which at first sight creates an awkward connection. The awkwardness, however, is only in appearance. It is the new reading that gives by far the deepest and most apposite sense here. It indicates a further end contemplated by the being built up in Christ. They are to be so built in order to make not only a spiritual house, but also a holy priesthood, and the spiritual house itself is to rise *with a view to*, or, *so as also to become*, the holy priesthood. As God's people once were, the house and the priesthood were distinct; now they are one. 'Under the Old Covenant Jehovah had His House, *and* His priests who served Him in His House; the Church fulfils both purposes under the New, being both His House *and* His holy priesthood' (see Wiesinger and Fronmüller). The epithet 'holy' simply marks off the priesthood as *consecrated* according to the idea of a priesthood. The noun expressing the priesthood itself is one entirely strange to profane Greek, but found in the LXX., and once again in the N. T. (ver. 9 of this chapter). It denotes priests not in their individual capacity, but as a collective body or college. It by no means follows, however, that it implies the existence of different *degrees* of priesthood among Christians (Canon Mason), or that it bears upon 'the office of a vicarious priesthood, representing and acting on behalf of the body corporate' (Canon Cook). The one thing it affirms is that all Christians as such, and without distinction, constitute a priestly fraternity corresponding to the community of priests established under the Law, and realizing the complete idea of a priesthood which the former college, with its limitation in numbers, and its sharp separation from the people, and its ritual service, imperfectly and distantly exhibited. 'The name priest,' says John Owen, 'is nowhere in Scripture attributed peculiarly and distinctly to the ministers of the Gospel as such; that which puts a difference between them and the rest of the people of God's holiness seems to be a more direct participation of Christ's prophetical, not sacerdotal, office. When Christ ascended on high, He gave some to be *prophets*, Eph. iv. 11; none, as we find, to be *priests*. Priests are a sort of church-officers whom Christ never appointed' (see Dr. John Brown *in loc.*). In the next few verses, Peter lingers lovingly over this great principle of grace, the priesthood of all believers, the right of every soul to go direct to God with its sins, and receive for itself His forgiveness through Christ,—the principle which the early Church proclaimed ('are not we who are laics also priests?'—Tertullian, *de Exhort. Castitatis*, chap. vii.), which was lost in the theology and ecclesiasticism of the Mediæval Church, although it lived in its hymnology, which finally revived in the Theses of Luther, and became the keynote of the Reformation.—**to offer up spiritual sacrifices.** If Christians are the spiritual house and the holy priesthood which make all necessity for a separate temple and a limited priesthood vanish, they must serve in priestly fashion Him whose house they make. Their service is to offer 'sacrifices,' and these, in conformity with the service itself, must be not material but 'spiritual.' In the O. T., sin and trespass offerings had to be offered first in order that access might be secured, and only after these, and in their train, came the sacrifices of consecration, praise, and thanksgiving. Under the N. T., access has been opened once for all by Christ's sacrifice for sin, and the only sacrifices which this priesthood is called to offer, or is capable of offering, are of the latter order. They embrace first the consecration of our living, active selves, which is described as the presenting of 'our bodies a living sacrifice' (Rom. xii. 1); and then those offerings which are the expression of that consecrated life,—the sacrifices of our praise and thanksgiving (which are compared to the fruit of our lips, Heb. xiii. 15; cf. also Ps. l. 23, cxvi. 17; Hos. xiv. 3), of our prayers (which are likened to incense, Ps. cxli. 2), of beneficent deeds and charitable givings (Heb. xiii. 16), of broken spirits and contrite hearts (Ps. li. 17), of obedience, the superiority of which to the sacrifices of the Law was declared so early as by Samuel to Agag (1 Sam. xv. 22), and finally, if need be, of a spent life or martyr's death, which Paul speaks of under the figure of the pouring out of the heathen libation, or the Jewish drink-offering, which accompanied the sacrifice (Phil. ii. 17). The verb used here in the sense of 'to offer,' is the usual LXX. term for the offering of sacrifice, and means properly to 'bring up to the altar.' It occurs thrice in the N. T. with the literal sense of 'carrying up,' or 'leading up' (Matt. xvii. 1; Mark ix. 2; and, in reference to the Ascension, Luke xxiv. 51). It is never found in the sacrificial application either in the Pauline writings or in the Classics, but has that sense again in ver. 24 of the present chapter, once in James (ii. 21), and thrice in Hebrews (vii. 27, ix. 28, xiii. 15).—**acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** This clause may be attached to the verb, so that the sense will be=to offer up through Jesus Christ acceptable sacrifices to God. This connection has in its favour the analogy of Heb. xiii. 15, and is urged on the ground that not only the acceptance of what is offered, but the very possibility of

offering, is dependent on Christ; so Alford, de Wette, Weiss, etc. It is better, however, on the whole, to connect it closely with the noun, both on account of the immediate vicinity of the noun, and because without such an addition the acceptance of the N. T. sacrifices (as due directly and simply to Christ) is not distinguished from the acceptance of the O. T. sacrifices (as dependent on certain ritual observances). The meaning, therefore, seems to be (as Luther, Bengel, Wiesinger, Hofmann, Huther, etc., read it) = to offer up spiritual sacrifices which through Jesus Christ are acceptable to God. To Him to whom we owe our first consecration as priests to God, we owe also the continued acceptance of all that we offer in our priestly ministry.

Ver. 6. **Because it is also contained in Scripture** (or, *in a scripture*). The passage in Peter's mind is the section of Isaiah (xxviii. 16) in which the prophet's stern declaration of the fate of Samaria and unsparing invective against the official classes of Judah break suddenly into 'words full of gentle seriousness and hope' (Ewald) addressed to the pious, and assuring them of the security which will 'justify their faith, even as the permanence of the temple-building verifies the solidity of the foundation' (Cheyne). The formula by which the passage is introduced (not 'wherefore also,' but, as the best authorities read, 'because') is the same as has been found twice already in similar connections (i. 16, 24). It indicates that Peter is not making an express quotation in order to establish, by the authority of the Old Testament, what he has just stated, but is rather giving in familiar Old Testament terms which come naturally to his pen, a reason for the case being as he has stated it to be. This is confirmed by the indefinite and impersonal phrase, *it is contained in Scripture*, or, *in a scripture* (the reading 'in *the* Scripture' is doubtful), as well as by the fact that the words are given neither exactly as they stand in the Hebrew text nor exactly as the LXX. Version renders them, but (as is also the case with Paul's use of them in Rom. ix. 33) with a number of significant variations. The point of the passage, therefore, seems to be this: the reason why they are to be built up into a spiritual house with the view to being a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices, lies in its having been God's will, as that is expressed in Scripture, to make Christ the foundation of His Church with that object (cf. Hofmann, Schott, etc.).—**Behold, I lay in Zion.** So Paul, too (Rom. ix. 33), gives it, instead of Isaiah's more explicit statement, *Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation* (literally, *I am He that hath founded*), or, as the LXX. puts it, *Behold, I lay to the foundations of Zion.* The object that is thus laid is, according to Isaiah, *a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.* But instead of introducing the object simply as a *stone*, and then defining that by a series of compound epithets (which Ewald and Delitzsch agree in rendering rather, 'a tried precious corner-stone of firmest foundation'), Peter names the object at once a *chief corner-stone*, and then defines it by two simple epithets, transforming Isaiah's order, and omitting some of his terms. Paul, again (Rom. ix. 33), seems to take the object not from Isa. xviii. 16, but from Isa. viii. 14.—**a chief corner-stone, elect** (or, *chosen*), **honourable.** The corner-stone is that stone in the foundation on which the angle of the building rests, and which is all-important to the stability of the building and the coherence of its parts. There is no reference here, however, to the union effected through Christ between Jew and Gentile (as Luther supposes), far less to Christ as 'the connecting link of the Old and New Testaments' (Fronmüller).—**and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.** The Hebrew text gives simply, *he that believeth*, leaving the object unnamed. The phrase 'on him' (or, as it may also be, 'on it') which Peter introduces (as also does Paul, Rom. ix. 33) is found, however, in some MSS. of the LXX. The clause which appears at once in Peter, in Paul, and in the LXX. as 'shall not be confounded' (or rather, *put to shame*), stands in the Hebrew text as 'shall not make haste,' or 'shall not flee in trepidation,' *i.e.* shall stand firm. The clause, therefore, is not a mere parallel to the previous 'grow unto salvation,' pointing to security in the final judgment (Schott), but gives a general assurance expressive of the confidence of those to whom the prophetic promise is fulfilled in Christ. The passage as it stands in Isaiah is set over against the Egyptian alliance which was sought at the time, and against the hurt and shame which are declared in the same connection (*e.g.* xxx. 1-7) to be destined for those who lean on Egypt instead of Jehovah. If this was in Peter's mind, the words would suggest the difference (confidence for the one, disappointment and shame to the other) between those who hold by Christ and those who cling to old national connections, and would appeal with peculiar force to those Christians who were in danger of yielding to the power of social surroundings in times of peril. In any case, the passage was admitted by the Rabbis to be of direct Messianic import. But whether the *stone* immediately in Isaiah's view is to be identified with Jehovah Himself, with the Davidic King, with the theocracy, with the Temple, or with the promise made to David and his house (2 Sam. vii. 12, 16), in Peter it is Christ Himself who is that Son of David in whom the kingdom was to reach its final glory, and in whom that promise is fulfilled. In both connections *faith* is specified. But while in the prophet it is faith in the sense of confidence, or in the sense of belief in the future fulfilment of a promise, in the apostle it is faith in the sense of personal reliance on Him who was promised and had appeared. In both cases, too, an assurance is attached to the faith—in Isaiah, that the Israelite who remains faithful instead of seeking secretly to Egypt shall not need to flee: in Peter, that the Christian who relies on Christ shall not be put to real shame, however scornfully handled.—The best interpreters are practically at one in recognising the doctrinal bearings of this brief but important section. Peter here expresses what Bishop Lightfoot (Comm. on Philip. i. 17) holds Paul's language also to express, 'the fundamental idea of the Christian Church, in which a universal priesthood has supplanted the exclusive ministrations of a select tribe or class.' Neander concludes that 'when the apostles applied the Old Testament idea of priesthood to Christianity, this was done invariably for the simple purpose of showing that no such visible particular priesthood could find place in the new community.' And Huther affirms the idea which is here expounded to be opposed 'not only to the catholic doctrine

of a particular priesthood, but to all teaching with regard to the office of the administration of word and sacrament which in any way ascribes to its possessors an importance in the Church, resting on Divine mandate, and *necessary* for the communication of salvation (*i.e.* priestly importance).'

CHAPTER II. 7–10.

The Honour pertaining to Christians as the True Israel.

7 UNTO you[1] therefore which believe *he is* [a]precious:[2] but unto them which be [b]disobedient,[3] the [c]stone which the builders [d]disallowed,[4] the same is made the [e]head of the
8 [f]corner,[5] and a [g]stone of stumbling,[6] and a rock of [h]offence, *even to them* which [i]stumble at the word,[7] being disobedient;[8]
9 whereunto also they were [k]appointed. But ye *are* a chosen [l]generation,[9] a [m]royal[10] priesthood, [n]an holy nation, a [o]peculiar people;[11] that ye should [p]show forth[12] the [q]praises[13] of him who hath[14] [r]called you out of [s]darkness into his
10 [t]marvellous [u]light: which in [v]time past *were* [w]not a people,[15] but *are* now the [x]people of God: which had not [y]obtained mercy,[16] but now have obtained mercy.

[a] Jo. iv. 44; Acts xxviii. 10; Rom. ii. 7, 10, ix. 21, xii. 20, xiii. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 23, 24; Col. ii. 23; 1 Thes. iv. 4; 1 Tim. i. 17, v. 17, vi. 1, 16; 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21; Heb. ii. 7, 9, iii. 3, v. 4; 1 Pet. i. 7; 2 Pet. i. 17; Rev. iv. 9, 11, v. 12, 13, vii. 12, xix. 1, xxi. 24, 26.
[b] Acts xiv. 2; Rom. x. 21, xi. 30; 1 Pet. ii. 8, iii. 1, 20, iv. 17; Deut. i. 26; Isa. lxv. 2.
[c] Ps. cxviii. 22; Isa. xxviii. 16.
[d] See refs. to ver. 4.
[e] Mat. xxi. 42; Acts iv. 11.
[f] Mat. vi. 5; Acts xxvi. 26; Rev. vii. 1, xx. 8.
[g] Isa. viii. 14; Rom. ix. 32, 33, xiv. 13, 20; 1 Cor. viii. 9.
[h] Isa. xxix. 21; Mat. xvi. 23, xiii. 41, xviii. 7; Lu. xvii. 1; Rom. ix. 9, 33, xiv. 13, xvi. 17; 1 Cor. i. 23; Gal. v. 11; 1 Jo. ii. 10; Rev. ii. 14.
[i] Ps. xci. 12; Prov. iii. 23; Mat. iv. 6, vii. 27; Jo. xi. 9, 10; Rom. ix. 32, xiv. 21.
[k] Isa. xliv. 6; Acts xiii. 47; 1 Thes. v. 9; 1 Tim. i. 12
[l] Isa. xliii. 20. See also refs. to 1 Pet. i 6.
[m] Ver. 5; Ex. xix. 6; Lu. vii. 25.
[n] Lu. vii. 5, xxiii. 2; Jo. xi. 48-52, xviii. 35.
[o] 2 Chron. xiv. 13; Mal. iii. 17; Eph. i. 14; 1 Thes. v. 9; 2 Thes. ii. 14; Heb x. 39. Cf. also Isa. xliii. 21; Ex. xix. 5; Deut. vii. 6.
[p] Ps. ix. 14. Cf. also Isa. xlii. 12, xliii. 21.
[q] Isa xlii 8, 12, xliii. 21, lxiii. 7; 2 Pet. i. 2, 5; Phil. iv. 8.
[r] Rom. viii. 30, ix. 11; 1 Cor. i. 9; Gal. v. 8; Col. iii. 15; 2 Thes. ii. 14; 1 Tim. vi. 12; Heb. ix. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 21, v. 10; 2 Pet. i. 3.
[s] Mat. iv. 16, vi. 22; Lu. i. 79, xi. 35, xxii. 53; Jo. iii. 19; Acts xxvi. 18; Rom. ii. 19, xiii. 12; 1 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Cor. vi. 14; Eph. v. 8, 11, vi. 12; Col. i. 13; 1 Thes. v. 5; 1 Jo. i. 6.
[t] Mat. xxi. 42; Mk. xii. 11; Jo. ix. 30; 2 Cor. xi. 14; Rev. xv. 1, 3.
[u] Lu. xvi. 8; 1 Tim. vi. 16; 1 Jo. i. 5, 7; Jo. ii. 8, viii. 12, xii. 36; Mat. iv. 16; Jo. i. 4, 5, iii. 19, 21; Acts xxvi. 18, 23; 2 Cor. vi. 14; Eph. v. 8, 9, 13; 1 Thes. v. 5, etc.
[v] Ch. iii. 5; Philem. 11, etc.
[w] Hos. ii. 23; Rom. x. 19; Deut. xxxii. 21.
[x] Heb. iv. 9, xi. 25; Rom. xi. 1.
[y] Mat. v. 7; Rom. xi. 30, 31; 1 Cor. vii. 25; 2 Cor. iv. 2; 1 Tim. i. 3, 16.

[1] *It may be* For you, *or simply*, Yours
[2] *or, as the R. V. gives it in the margin*, is the honour. *The A. V. has* he is an honour *in the margin, while the R. V. has* is the preciousness *in its text.*
[3] *or, with the R. V.*, for such as disbelieve
[4] rejected
[5] *literally*, this was made head of the corner
[6] *or, with R. V.*, and, a stone of stumbling, *etc.*
[7] *literally*, who stumble at the word, *and so*, to those who stumble, *etc.*, *or, with R. V.*, for they stumble
[8] *or, as margin of R. V.*, stumble, being disobedient to the word
[9] *or*, race
[10] *or*, kingly
[11] *literally*, a people for acquisition, *or, as R. V. gives it*, a people for *God's* own possession
[12] *or*, that ye may tell out
[13] *literally*, virtues, *or, with R. V.*, excellences
[14] *omit* hath
[15] who once were no people
[16] *literally*, been compassionated

The central thing in the preceding paragraph was the Stone with the structure erected on it. The sudden transition from the figure of babes growing to that of stones built up, is by no means characteristic only of Peter. In Paul we have even bolder instances of apparent confusion of metaphors, as when in one breath he represents believers as at once *walking, rooted*, and *built up* in Christ (Col. ii. 27). This disregard of the ordinary congruities of figurative speech, however, is not due to mere rhetorical vehemence overleaping the accepted proprieties of style. It has its reason in the nature of the realities of grace, which language is strained to express, and in which things meet which are otherwise distinct. As Paul's seeming mixture of the similes of walking, rooting, and building has its explanation in the spiritual fact that the union with Christ,

which his phrase 'in Christ' denotes, is at once the sphere within which the life of the Christian moves, the soil in which it is rooted, and the foundation on which it stands; so Peter's seeming confusion between *growth* and *building* is but a reflection of the fact that the edifice of which he speaks is a living one, which increases by the living process of growth. How much this injunction to be built up on Christ by coming ever to Him involved for these readers will be understood, however, only if it is remembered that to come to Christ in those days meant for the Jew expulsion from the Temple and the fellowship of the ancient Church of God, and for the Gentile the disruption of the bonds of national religion and ancestral social usage. It is not without reason, therefore, that at this point the writer pauses to exhibit the more than compensation for all such loss and dislocation to be found in the honour which accrues through that attachment to Christ which has been depicted as the coming of living stones to be built upon a living foundation. This he does in a remarkable series of descriptive terms transferred from the Old Testament Israel to the New.

Ver. 7. **For you, therefore, who believe is the honour.** The statement of the dignity of the Christian standing is introduced in the form both of an inference from the revealed will of God as declared by the prophet, and a direct application of the Old Testament assurance to these New Testament believers. The phrase 'who believe' is put last in the original (=for you, therefore, is the honour, for you, I say, who believe), because it is only on the ground of their faith (which is given not as a condition here, but as a fact) that the assurance is applied to them. The pronoun 'for you' may mean either *to your advantage*, or *to you belongs*. The margin of the R. V., indeed, gives 'in your sight.' But that is to introduce the subjective estimates of believers where Peter deals with their objective privileges. The difficulty, however, is to catch the point of the noun which expresses the thing that thus belongs to them or is to their advantage. Not a few interpreters, including Luther, Calvin, and Erasmus, as well as the Versions of Tyndale, Cranmer, and Geneva, take Christ as the subject, and the noun as the predicate. The E. V. follows this, giving 'he is precious' in the text, and 'he is an honour' in the margin. This is opposed, however, both by the form of the Greek which marks out the noun as subject and not as predicate, and by the close connection with the immediately preceding sentence which is indicated by the reduplicating of the 'who believe' upon the previous 'he that believeth.' Most interpreters now agree that the subject of the sentence is not Christ Himself, but what is called (in reference, that is, to the dignity expressed in the former sentence) '*the* honour,' *i.e.* the honour already spoken of, and that the predicate is the 'for you.' This was also recognised, indeed, by Wycliffe and the Rheims Version. There is some difference, however, as to the precise reference of the noun. Some (Gerhard, Brückner, Weiss, Schott, Huther, etc.) take it to repeat in positive form what was implied in the negative clause, 'shall not be put to shame.' Others (Wiesinger, etc.) think it goes back to the definition of the Stone as 'precious' or 'honourable' (ver. 6), the sense being that the value which the Stone has in God's sight is a value which it has for them who believe. This seems favoured by the rendering of the R. V., 'for you . . . is the preciousness.' Others (Alford, Fronmüller, Cook) combine these references, and this comes nearest the truth. The sentence takes up the whole idea, which has just been expressed, of an honour in which the foundation stands with God, and what that fact carries with it to believers. Mr. Humphry, therefore, rightly takes the full sense to amount to this, 'For you who believe in Him, for your sakes, is this preciousness, this honour which He possesses; that so far from being "put to shame" (ver. 6), ye may partake in it, be yourselves precious in the sight of God' (*Comm. on Rev. Version*, p. 440). —**but for such as are disobedient.** The reverse side of the prophetic assurance is now exhibited, and, as the omission of the article indicates, the persons are named now in a more general way, not as if definite individuals were in view, but so as to include all of a certain kind. The reading varies here between two participles, both of more positive import than the simple 'unbelieving,' and differing slightly from each other. They mean 'disbelieving,' or 'refusing belief,' and point, therefore, either to the state of disobedience which is the effect of unbelief (Alford), or (as the form which is on the whole better supported rather implies) to the mind that withstands evidence.—**The stone which the builders rejected, this was made the head of the corner**; instead of saying simply that *shame*, in place of honour, belongs to the disbelieving, Peter gives in the words of Scripture a less direct, but more terrible, statement of the lot of such. Two passages are cited. These are not run into one, however, as the A. V. suggests, but are given as two distinct quotations simply connected by 'and,' as the R. V. puts them. Portions of the sections from which these are taken are fused into one sentence in Rom. ix. 33. The first, which is given according to the LXX., is taken from Ps. cxviii. 22. That Psalm is generally regarded as a post-Exilian composition, and its occasion has been variously identified with the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in the year of the Return, as recorded in Ezra iii. 4 (so Ewald, etc.), with the laying of the foundation-stone of the Second Temple, as described in Ezra iii. 8–13 (so Hengstenberg, etc.), with the consecration of the Temple, as related in Ezra vi. 5–18 (Delitzsch, etc.), or with the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles which Nehemiah (viii. 13–18) reports to have taken place on the completion of the new Temple. In the Psalm, therefore, the Stone would be a figure of Israel itself, rejected by the powers of the world, but chosen by God for a position of unexampled honour. But the Messianic application of the passage has its ground in the fact that Christ Himself, and only Christ, was personally and truly that 'Servant of Jehovah,' that 'first-born' of God that Israel was called as a nation to be, and that the destiny which was so partially fulfilled by Israel was finally realized in Him, who was of the seed of Israel. So Christ uses the passage in direct reference to Himself (Matt. xxi. 42–44; Mark xii. 10, 11; Luke xx. 17), as it is again applied directly to Him by Peter (Acts iv. 11).

Ver. 8. **and, A stone of stumbling and rock of offence.** The second passage is taken from Isa. viii. 14, and is given according to the Hebrew,

not according to the singularly divergent version of the LXX. What is said there of Jehovah of hosts, namely, that, while He is a sanctuary to those who sanctify Him, he will be a 'Stone for striking against, and a rock of stumbling' to the mass of the faithless people of both kingdoms, is here affirmed of Christ. The terms, too, denote not what the disbelieving feel Christ to be (so Luther, etc.), or the offence which they take at Him, but what He in point of fact must prove objectively to them. Compare Simeon's declaration of what the infant Saviour was destined to be (Luke ii. 34, 35).—A difficulty has been felt by not a few interpreters with the positive form in which Christ is here said to have been *made* what these prophetic statements represent Jehovah as certain to be to particular classes. But Peter says nothing more here than what Paul affirms when he speaks of the same persons being a 'savour of life unto life,' and a 'savour of death unto death' (2 Cor. ii. 16), and nothing beyond what had been expressed—still more strongly, indeed, and in terms of the same citation by his Lord Himself (Luke xx. 17, 18)—the truth that God's grace is not a neutral gift, but becomes its opposite to its scorners. Special difficulty has been felt with the statement that Christ was made to the *disbelieving* head of the corner. It is proposed, therefore, to construe the sentence in an entirely novel way, namely, 'He then who on the one hand is an Honour to the believing and to the disbelieving, on the other hand the Stone rejected of the builders, was made to the one class head of the corner, and to the other a stone of stumbling,' etc. (Hofmann). Others explain it on the principle that a stone which is not recognised by the eye becomes an obstacle for the feet to strike against (Gerhard, Steiger, etc.). But the point may simply be that the Divine demonstration of Christ as made the very thing which they refused to admit in Him, itself puts the disbelieving to the shame against which the believing are declared to be secured. 'God thus poured into their own bosom the contempt which they had poured upon His Son' (Lillie).—**who stumble, disobeying the word.** This is not an independent sentence, whether it be construed as='They who stumble are disobedient,' etc., or as='These stumble,' etc., or (with Hofmann on the uncertain analogy of the use of the relative as an exclamation in Matt. xxvi. 30) as='As for those who stumble . . . to what a fate were they appointed!' It continues the previous statement, and that, too, not as appending a reason for it (so apparently the R. V., '*for* they stumble'), but in the simple form of an explanation='that is to say, to those who stumble,' or, as the A. V. puts it, 'even to them which stumble.' The Vulgate and the other English Versions, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, the Geneva, the Rheims, as also the A. V. and the older commentators, such as Erasmus, Luther, etc., agree in making the 'word' dependent on the 'stumble.' Most now, however, following the Syriac, Bengel, etc., rightly connect the 'word' with the 'disobeying,' both because the 'stumble' has been already sufficiently defined, and because the participle otherwise would be a pointless addition. The *stumbling* (again in the objective sense) and the *disobedience* are related to each other as simultaneous things, or as cause and effect. Christ is what He is declared to be to a certain class, *when* or *because* they disobey the Word. He is made a stone of stumbling only to those who, by rejecting that Word, in point of fact turn God's grace in Christ to their own hurt. —**whereunto also they were appointed.** A solemn expression of the truth that not only is it so, but it cannot be otherwise. The apparent severity of the statement has been so acutely felt, that a variety of expedients have been attempted with a view to change or mitigate it. Three classes of interpretations have to be noticed. There are those entirely unreasonable interpretations which refuse to see that Peter has *God* in view as the Author of the 'appointment,' and add to the verb 'were appointed' some such explanation as 'by Jewish prejudice' (Hottinger), 'by Satan' (Aretius), or 'by Old Testament prophecy' (Mason). There are those, again, which endeavour to make the clause a single sentence with the preceding. This is the case with Erasmus, Luther, etc., and also with several of our older English Versions. Thus Tyndale gives 'believe not that wherein they were set,' the Rhemish 'neither do believe wherein also they are put,' and so substantially also Wycliffe and Cranmer. But the Genevan has 'unto the which thing also they were ordained.' There are also those (and this third class embraces the great majority) which recognise a distinct assertion of a Divine ordinance. This is undoubtedly the only valid exegesis. It is impossible to adjust the terms to any less positive idea. The opening words cannot be softened into 'on account of which,' but denote the *destiny* or *end* which is set for the disobedient. The verb means here, as repeatedly elsewhere, *ordain*, *constitute*, *appoint*, and the 'also' has its ascensive force, indicating that there is something deeper even than observed fact to be said upon the subject. The precise thing to which the disobedient are said to be ordained, however, is differently conceived. Some construe the sentence as = to which disobedience also they were appointed (Calvin preferentially, Beza, etc.); some as = to which stumbling, etc. (Grotius, Bengel, Steiger, Huther, Weiss, etc.); and some, again, as = to which disobedience and stumbling, etc. (de Wette, Wiesinger, Leighton, Hofmann, Lillie, etc.). Of these three constructions the second is the simplest and most contextual. For the main subject of the section has been neither the *genesis* of faith and unbelief, nor their moral merit and demerit, but the positive honour which is destined for the believer, and the positive shame or stumbling which is destined for the unbeliever. It is to be observed, too, that the verb introduced here is not the term which bears the technical sense of *foreordaining*, but one which (with a single doubtful exception in 1 Thess. v. 9) is always used in the New Testament of things done in time (cf. John xv. 16; Acts xx. 28; 1 Tim. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11). There is, therefore, no affirmation here of a predestination of some to unbelief. Whatever ordination is asserted, is, as Wetstein briefly puts it, an ordination 'not that they shall sin, but that, if sinning, they shall be punished.' Just as it is said in ver. 6, 'Behold, I *lay* (or, *set*) in Zion a chief corner-stone,' so it is said here (for the verbs are the same) that they 'were *appointed* (or, *set*).' In the one case it is what God has actually done in making Christ what He is to the Church; in the other it is what He has done in so relating

disobedience and stumbling that the latter is the result of the former. The historical relation established between these two things has its ground in the eternal purpose of God, and the New Testament does not shrink from carrying back (and in the least qualified terms, cf. Rom. ix. 21, etc.) the gravest moral facts of history to the Divine mind. At present, however, Peter speaks directly not of the foreordaining counsel of God, but of the fact that things are so ordered in time, that unbelief carries in its train the turning to men's own hurt of that grace of God in Christ which brings honour to the believer. Weiss, therefore, deals more fairly than most with the exegesis of the passage, when he says that it 'does not speak of the foreordination of individuals to unbelief, or to exclusion from the kingdom of God; it states that in accordance with a Divine arrangement the disobedient are appointed to stumbling, *i.e.*, however, not to going astray morally, but to destruction' (*Bib. Theol.* i. p. 208, Eng. Trans.). This Divine order or determination of things, however, which links together subjective aversion to truth and objective penalty, is a mystery to which, not less than to that of the Divine foreordination, Leighton's words apply: 'Here it were easier to lead you into a deep than to lead you forth again. I will rather stand on the shore and silently admire, than enter into it.'

Ver. 9. **But ye are an elect race.** From these thoughts of terror Peter returns to the brighter side of the compensation which the believer has for temporal loss and trial, and instances in a single breath four great titles of Christian honour. These express the incomparable superiority of the life of faith over the life of disobedience; for the emphatic 'but ye' contrasts the readers not with the Old Testament Church, but with those just described as destined to stumble. They exhibit the Christian life, therefore, in antithesis to a life rooted in mere nature and nationality. They recall at the same time the fact that these scattered sojourners are, according to the New Testament standard, that very Church of God which national Israel was meant to be according to the Old Testament standard. It is more than doubtful whether, in the use of the successive terms *race, nation, people* (which are simply taken from the LXX.), Peter had in view any such distinctions as those between people as of like descent, people as of like customs, and people as an organized body (Steiger). But all four terms point to the fact that believers are not a mere aggregate of individuals, but form a unity, and, indeed, the only unity worthy of the name. So they are designated, first of all, in words suggested probably by Isa. xliii. 20, a *race* (not merely a *generation*, as the A. V. here, and only here, renders the term), a body with community of life and descent; and *elect* in so far as they were made this by God's choosing and separating them out of the world.—**a royal priesthood.** This second title is taken from the description of Israel in Ex. xix. 6, and is of somewhat uncertain import. It is variously taken to be equivalent to 'kings and priests' (Lillie, on analogy of Rev. i. 6), 'a magnificent priesthood' (Aretius), 'a priesthood exercising kingly rule over the world' (Wiesinger), 'a priesthood serving a king' (Weiss), 'a priesthood belonging to a king and in his service' (Huther), 'a priesthood of kingly honour' (Hofmann), 'a kingdom of priests' (Schott). The form of the adjective used here (and probably nowhere else in the New Testament) means, however, *belonging to a king, or worthy of a king*, and never 'consisting of kings,' or 'having kingly rule.' The phrase itself, too, represents a Hebrew phrase which is understood, indeed, by the Syriac Version, the Targums, the Septuagint, and a few commentators, such as Keil, to denote a *kingship* of priests, or a body of priests with kingly honour, but is held by most to mean a kingdom consisting of priests, a community ruled by a king, and dedicated to His service, and having the priestly right of access to Him (see Dillmann on Ex. xix. 6). Hence the import of the title as applied by Peter depends on the question whether he uses it in the proper sense of the Greek terms, or in the sense of the original Hebrew as inexactly rendered by the LXX. In the latter case, it will mean 'a kingdom indeed, but one of priests.' In favour of this it is urged that it retains the analogy of the other titles, each of which names some purely natural or national community, and qualifies it by a distinctive epithet. They are named, that is to say, a *race*, but are distinguished from others as *elect*, a *nation* but a *holy* one, a *people* but a *peculiar* one, and, in the same way, a *kingdom* but one of priestly order and membership. In the former case, the idea will be simply that of a priesthood 'belonging to a king,' or 'of kingly honour.'—**a holy nation,** *i.e.* a commonwealth consecrated to God,—a title taken again from Ex. xix. 6, and in the same connection as there.—**a people for possession,** *i.e.* a people whom God has taken for His own. The A. V., following Tyndale, the Genevan Version, and the Bishops' Bible, and induced probably by the Vulgate's rendering, gives 'peculiar' (as also in Tit. ii. 14),—a word which, having lost its etymological sense, is now an inappropriate rendering. Wycliffe gives 'a people of purchasing;' Cranmer, 'a people which are won;' the Rhemish, 'a people of purchase.' The noun occurs again in 1 Thess. v. 9 (A. V. 'to obtain'), 2 Thess. ii. 14 (A. V. 'the obtaining'), Eph. i. 14 (A. V. 'purchased possession'), and Heb. x. 39 (A. V. 'saving'). The cognate verb is translated *purchase* (Acts xx. 28; 1 Tim. iii. 13). The noun may have either the active sense of *acquiring, acquisition*, or the passive sense of *the thing acquired.* It is wrongly taken in the former sense here, however (Schott, *e.g.*, makes it = a people yet to be acquired), because Peter deals not with what God is to make His people in the future, but with what He has made them now. The phrase reproduces, with some change in the form, the idea expressed in Isa. xliii. 21, as well as in Ex. xix. 5. The Hebrew term used in the latter passage occurs again in such passages as Deut. vii. 6 (A. V. 'a special people'). xiv. 2, xxvi. 18; Ps. cxxxv. 4 (A. V. 'peculiar treasure'); Mal. iii. 17 (A. V. 'jewels'). It denotes *property*,—not, however, *mere* property as such, but *precious* property, or rather perhaps property belonging specially and individually to one. Here, therefore, it is sufficiently well rendered by the R. V., 'a people for *God's* own possession.'—**that ye should show forth,** or rather, as the verb implies (which occurs nowhere else in the N. T.), **that ye should tell out.** So Wycliffe gives 'tell' and the Rhemish 'declare,' while Tyndale,

Cranmer, and the Genevan have 'show.'—**the excellences.** The Greek word is the familiar term for *virtues*, and so it is rendered here by the margin of the A. V., as well as by Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, the Genevan, and the Rhemish. It is used, however, by the LXX. as equivalent to the Heb. term for *praise* or *praises*. So it occurs in the passage (Isa. xliii. 21) which Peter has in mind here; and as the prophet speaks there of the people whom Jehovah had formed for Himself as having a vocation to relate how He had glorified Himself in them (see Delitzsch, *in loc.*), it is reasonable to suppose that the term here denotes not the *words* of praise, but (as it is used also by Philo) the *things* which evoke praise, the *excellences* of God, whether in the sense of the excellent *deeds* of His grace (so Schott, as most nearly expressing the idea in Isaiah), or His excellent *attributes* manifested in these deeds (Huther and most). It is with this object that they are made what they are. If they are what these titles indicate, it is not with a view to their own glorification, but to qualify them and put them under obligation to publish these excellences of God to others. This 'showing forth' may apply, as it is largely taken, to the duty of glorifying God by the fruits of a new life. But, as the verb is used regularly of *verbal* declaration, and as the LXX. rendering of Isaiah's phrase (xliii. 21) has a similar force, what is intended rather is that the N. T. Israel is set to continue the prophetic vocation of the O. T. Israel, and is made what it is in order to proclaim Christ to those outside, as its predecessor was made God's people in order to be His preacher to the nations.—**of him who called you**, that is, as formerly, *God*, not Christ. —**out of darkness into his marvellous light.** It is to make too little of the term 'light' to say that it refers simply to the Christian life. It is to make too much of it, however, to say that it points to God's own presence or Being as that to which they are called. God *is* light, but He is also *in the* light (1 John i. 5, 7). The familiar figures point here simply to two contrasted spheres of existence, to one as that of heathen ignorance and hopelessness, to another as that of holiness and serenity. This latter is '*His* light,' the sphere of existence which belongs to God, the new kingdom which also is 'marvellous' (perhaps Ps. cxviii. 23 is still in Peter's thoughts) to eyes opened to see it, as is to 'idle orbs' the sight 'of sun, or moon, or star throughout the year, or man, or woman' (Milton).

Ver. 10. **Who once were no people, but are now God's people.** A solemn and summary conclusion, sketching in two bold strokes the vast contrast between their present and their past. The contrast is drawn in order that in the recollection of their past they may find an incentive to adhere at any cost to their prophetic vocation of telling forth to others the excellences of God. Once they were not only not God's people, but 'no people.' National connection they might have had, but the unity that makes a people worthy of the name of a people they had not. Their lack of relation to God involved lack of that relation to each other which merges differences of race, speech, worship, custom, opinion. Now they are not only a people, with the bonds of a true people's union, but God's people, owned of Him and administered by Him.—**who once had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.** If they were in time past no people, the reason lay here, that God's mercy had not brought them into relation to Himself. Two participles briefly express this, and they vary in tense. The former is the perfect, as referring to a *state* in which they had long continued previously. The latter is the historical past, as referring to a definite act of God which changed the state. Once they had been in the condition of persons not compassionated; now they are persons once for all compassionated of God. The verse is a free adaptation of the prophetic passage (Hos. ii. 23), in which Jehovah, reversing the ominous names, *Lo-ruhamah* and *Lo-ammi*, given in the first chapter (vers. 6, 9), says of Israel, 'I will compassion Uncompassionated, and to Not-my-people I will say My-people, and he will say My God!' Peter's reproduction is of the most general kind, omitting the characteristic notes which apply specially to a people who had once been God's people, and had lapsed in order to be restored. Though in Hosea, therefore, the words are spoken of Israel, it does not follow that they must refer to Jews here. Paul applies them to Gentiles (Rom. ix. 25), and that Peter's view-point is the same appears from the form which he has given to the contrast, which is too absolute to suit those who, while originally God's people, had ceased to be true to that vocation, and had lost on that account God's favour. (See also the Introduction.)

CHAPTER II. 11, 12.

Exhortation to Purity of Life in face of the Heathen.

11 DEARLY[1] [a]beloved, I [b]beseech *you* as [c]strangers and [d]pilgrims,[2] [e]abstain[3] from [f]fleshly [g]lusts, which war
12 against the soul; having your [h]conversation[4] [i]honest[5] among the Gentiles; that, whereas[6] they speak [k]against you as [l]evil-doers, they may by[7] *your* good works, which they shall [m]behold, [n]glorify God in the day of [o]visitation.

[a] Ch. iv. 12; 2 Pet. i. 17, iii. 1, 8, 14, 15, 17; Rom. xii. 19; 1 Cor. x. 14; 2 Cor. vii. 1, xii. 19; Heb. vi. 9, etc.
[b] Rom. xii. 1, xv. 30, xvi. 15; Heb. iii. 13, xiii. 19, 22, etc.
[c] Acts vii. 6, 29; Eph. ii. 19.
[d] See refs. to ch. i. 1.
[e] Acts xv. 29, 30; 1 Thes. iv. 3, v. 22; 1 Tim. iv. 3; Jer. vii. 14.
[f] Rom. xv. 27; 1 Cor. iii. 3, ix. 11; 2 Cor. i. 12, x. 4.
[g] See refs. to ch. i. 14.
[h] See refs. to ch. i. 15.
[i] Ch. iv. 10; Rom. vii. 16, xii. 17, xiv. 21; 1 Cor. v. 6; Gal. iv. 18; Heb. xiii. 9; Jas. iii. 13, iv. 17, etc.
[k] Ch. iii. 16; Jas. iv. 11; Job xix. 3.
[l] Ch. iii. 16, iv. 15; Jo. xviii. 30; Prov. xii. 4, xxiv. 19.
[m] Ch. iii. 21. Cf. also Ps. ix. 34.
[n] Mat. v. 16, ix. 8, etc.
[o] Lu. xix. 44. Cf. also Mat. xxv. 36, 43; Lu. i. 68, 78, vii. 16; Acts vii. 23, xv. 14, 36; Heb. ii. 6; Jas. i. 27.

[1] *omit* Dearly
[2] sojourners, *as in Revised Version*
[3] to abstain, *as in Revised Version*
[4] manner of life, *or*, behaviour
[5] comely, good, *or*, *with Revised Version*, seemly
[6] wherein
[7] *or*, as the result of

The mode of address indicates a distinct point of transition in the Epistle. The writer has dealt so far with what holds good absolutely of Christian privilege and Christian responsibility. He begins now to enforce what Christians are concerned to be and to do in certain particular circumstances and connections. And before proceeding to specify their obligations in society and in the various relations of life, he sets before them, in the form of an affectionate personal appeal, the attitude which they ought to maintain generally in presence of the impure and hostile surroundings of heathenism. The kind of life which they are sedulously to cultivate in presence alike of the temptations and of the misrepresentations to which they are exposed from their Gentile associates is stated both on its negative side and on its positive. It is recommended, too, by considerations drawn from their own position, from the injuriousness of the things to which they are tempted, and from their vocation to glorify God.

Ver. 11. **Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and sojourners.** The injunction is given in terms of tender urgency. The opening designation occurs no less than eight times in the Epistles of Peter, and in every case except the present the A. V. translates it simply 'beloved,' not 'dearly beloved.' Paul has a peculiar fondness for it (cf. Rom. xii. 19; 1 Cor. x. 14, xv. 58; 2 Cor. vii. 1, xii. 19; Phil. ii. 12, iv. 1). Here, as also at iv. 12, the direct and appealing address marks a turning-point in the Epistle. The verb, too, embraces at least the two ideas of *beseeching* and *exhorting*, and is variously rendered in different connections by the A. V. *call for* (Acts xxviii. 20, etc.), *entreat* (Luke xv. 28, etc.), *beseech* (Matt. viii. 5, etc.), *desire* (Matt. xxviii. 32, etc.), *pray* (Matt. xviii. 32, etc.), *exhort* (1 Pet. v. 1, 2), *comfort* (Matt. ii. 18, etc.). They are appealed to in the character of *strangers* and *sojourners*; of which terms the latter is the one used in the first designation of the readers (see note on i. 1, and compare specially Ps. xxxix. 12), and conveys a somewhat different idea from the 'pilgrims' of the A. V., while the former denotes properly residents without the rights of natives. They have manifestly the metaphorical sense here, applicable to all believers as citizens of heaven. It is doubtful whether any distinction between them is intended here, although Bengel discovers a certain climax in them, Christians being described by the first as distant from their own *house*, and by the second as distant even from their own country. Former exhortations were grounded on their being 'children of obedience' (i. 14); these which follow are grounded on their being children whose home is not where temptation works.—**to abstain from fleshly** (or, *the fleshly*) **lusts.** The 'lusts' are, as in i. 14, not merely the fetid sensualities which had attained such monstrous strength in the heathenism of the time (though these may well have been particularly in view), but all inordinate passions and desires, all that would come within Paul's enumeration of the works of the flesh (Gal. v. 19–21), or John's description (1 John ii. 16) of 'the world's accursed trinity' (Leighton). They are called *fleshly* (cf. Paul's 'worldly lusts,' Tit. ii. 12, and 'lusts of the flesh and of the mind,' Eph. ii. 3), as being rooted in, and affected by the quality of, the 'flesh' or nature of man, both physical and psychical, as now depraved. When Paul (Rom. vii. 14) speaks of himself as 'carnal,' he uses a still stronger form of the adjective, one denoting the personality as more than of the *quality* of the flesh,—as having the 'flesh' for the substantial element of its being.—**which war against the soul.** The 'which' might be rendered 'as they.' Peter, as the particular pronoun indicates, does not signalize *certain* lusts, namely, those which war against the soul, but takes fleshly lusts as a

whole, and describes them as being all of a quality hostile to the soul, and this quality in them he makes a reason for abstaining from them. They may work 'in our members' (Rom. vii. 5), consume our strength, and injure us in our interests, but the 'soul,' the very centre of the personal life, is the object of their assault. The verb is nowhere used again by Peter in this figurative sense of carrying on a *warfare* (not merely = besieging), but has a similar sense in 2 Cor. x. 3; 1 Tim. i. 18; Jas. iv. 1.

Ver. 12. **Having your manner of life among the Gentiles seemly.** The negative abstention from impurities is now defined as involving a positive purity. The life of self restraint in the heart of corrupting heathen associations is to be a life so *honest*, or rather (with Wycliffe and the Rhemish) so *good*, so fair and honourable, that even the Gentiles may confess its attractiveness. **—that, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by reason of your good works, witnessing** (these as they do) **glorify God.** Their outer life, with all that in their behaviour which is open to the observation and judgment of others, is now specially dealt with, and they are counselled to make that a spectacle of good works which even prejudiced and hostile eyes shall be unable to contest. With this 'speak against you' compare the 'as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against' (Acts xviii. 22). The 'that' expresses the object which is to be aimed at in keeping this seemliness of conduct. The A. V. (with Beza, the Bishops' Bible, etc.) wrongly renders 'whereas.' Equally wrong is the 'while' or the 'since' of others. The word means 'wherein' (as A. V. in margin), or 'in the thing in which,' and the idea is that in the very matter in which they now find ground for speaking ill of you, they may yet find ground for the reverse. This matter, which is to be turned from a ground of accusation to a ground of honourable recognition, or (as it is here put) a ground of glorifying God, need not be identified particularly with the 'good works' (Steiger), their 'whole tenor of life' (de Wette), their Christian profession generally (Hofmann, Huther), or their abstinence from fleshly lusts. It points to whatever part of their Christian practice their Gentile neighbours seized as the occasion of slander. The term translated 'witnessing' (which is used in classical Greek as the technical term for admission into the third and highest grade of the Eleusinian mysteries) occurs again in the New Testament only in 1 Pet. iii. 2, and in the nominal form in 2 Pet. i. 16 ('*eye-witnesses*' of His majesty). It expresses here keen personal observation. The name applied to these believers, 'evil-doers,' is of importance. It is that which is also given to Christ Himself by the chief priests (John xviii. 30), and outside Peter's Epistles it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except in that instance. Neander (*History of the Planting of Christianity*, ii. p. 374, Bohn) is of opinion that the 'Christians were now persecuted as *Christians*, and according to those popular opinions of which Nero took advantage were looked upon and treated as "evil-doers" . . . *malefici*.' Whether the name will bear the sense of *state criminals* here, however, is doubtful. The accusations thrown out against them as practising murder, magical arts, infanticide, cannibalism, and gross immorality belong to the later periods of which we read in the Apologists (*e.g.* Justin Martyr's *Apol.* i., Tertullian's *Apol.* xvi.), and in writers of the age of Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* iv. 7, v. 1), and Augustine (*De Civit. Dei*, xviii. 53). At an earlier date we have the famous letter of the philosopher Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, in which he reports upon his examination of the followers of Christ in the very territories here addressed by Peter, admitting that nothing had been discovered in them worthy of death, but charging them with a stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy which he deemed worthy of punishment. Earlier still, we gather from the Roman historians Suetonius (*Nero*, ch. 16) and Tacitus (*Annals*, xv. 44) how they were spoken against as men of a 'new and malignant superstition,' as 'hateful for their enormities,' as 'convicted of hating the human race.' And it is easy to see how at the very earliest period to which this Epistle may be referred, and before the state had directed its attention to them, their abstention from such familiar pleasures as the public spectacles, their non-observance of many heathen customs, their gatherings for fellowship and worship, would expose them to popular odium and to the misrepresentation of their pagan neighbours. Peter's exhortation is not to isolate themselves, but to be careful of their behaviour in the sight of the heathen till they found a 'silent witness and ally' (Lillie) in the hearts of their calumniators themselves. It is generally recognised that Peter has in mind here his Lord's words upon the Mount (Matt. v. 16). **—in the day of visitation.** Definition of the time when the heathen will glorify the God whom they at present discredit in dishonouring His servants. What is this *day?* Some take it to be the day of judicial inquisition, the time when these Christians would have to stand examination at the hands of heathen officials (Œcum., Bengel at first, etc.). It is, however, manifestly God's day, and not man's, that is in view. Is it, then, His day of mercy, or His day of judgment? The word (either as noun or as verb) occurs not unfrequently of *gracious* visitation (*e.g.* the LXX. rendering of Gen. xx. 1; Ex. iii. 16, iv. 31; 1 Sam. ii. 21; Job vii. 18; and in the New Testament, Luke i. 68, 78; Acts xv. 14). It is applied also to God's visitations in *chastening* or *punishment* (Jer. ix. 24, 25, xliv. 13, xlvi. 25, ix. 9; Ps. lix. 6; Ex. xx. 5). Hence a variety of interpretations. Some think the day is meant when the Christians themselves shall have to bear God's chastenings in the form of the persecution which even now overhung them, and when their patience shall turn out (as we know indeed from history it not seldom did turn in such cases) to the conversion of their adversaries. Others hold the reference to be to the temporal calamities by which God now sifts and judges the heathen, or to the final adjustments of the last day. On the analogy of 1 Cor. v. 20, it is also affirmed that what is in view is the practical, though unwitting, confession of God's glory which will be recognised at the last judgment in the fact that the goodness of the Christian life was the true cause of heathen slanders (Schott). It is most in harmony, however, with the context, with the analogy of Matt. v. 16, and especially with the declaration of James in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv. 14), to interpret it (with Hofmann, Huther, and the great majority of

exegetes both ancient and modern) of the day (the day which had already dawned indeed) when God should bring His grace to these Gentiles, and lead them to recognise in the pure and unworldly lives of the subjects of their present calumnies a witness to the fact that 'God was in them of a truth.'

CHAPTER II. 13–17.

The Attitude to Constituted Authority which is implied in the Honest Conversation or Seemly Manner of Life.

13 [a]SUBMIT yourselves to every [b]ordinance of [c]man [1] for the
Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as [d]supreme; [2]
14 or unto [e]governors, as unto them that are sent by [3] him for the
[f]punishment of [4] [g]evil-doers, and for the [h]praise of them that
15 d[i]well. For [j]so is the [k]will of God, that with [l]well-doing
ye may put to [m]silence the [n]ignorance of [o]foolish [5] men:
16 as free, and not using *your* [p]liberty [6] for a [q]cloak [7] of [r]mali-
17 ciousness,[8] but as the [s]servants of God. [t]Honour all *men*.
Love the [u]brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

[a] Lu. ii. 51; Rom. viii. 7, 20; Eph. v. 21, 24, Heb. xii. 9; Jas. iv. 7; Ps. lxi. 1.
[b] Mk. x. 6, xiii 19, xvi. 15; Rom. i. 20, 25, viii. 19, 20, 21, 22, 39; 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15; Col. i. 15, 23; Heb. iv. 13, ix. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 4; Rev. iii. 14.
[c] Rom. vi. 19; 1 Cor. ii. 4, 13, iv. 3, x. 13; Jas. iii. 7.
[d] Rom. xiii. 1. Cf. also Phil. ii. 3, iii. 8.
[e] Mat. ii. 16, x. 18, xxvii. 2, 11, 14, 15, 21, 23, 27, xxviii. 14; Mk. xiii. 9; Lu. xx. 20, xxi. 12; Acts xxiii. 24, 26, 33, 34, xxiv. 1, 10, xxvi. 30.
[f] Lu. xviii. 7, 8, xxi. 22; Acts vii. 24; Rom. xii. 19; 2 Cor. vii. 11; 2 Thes. i. 8.
[g] See refs. on ver. 12.
[h] See refs. on ch. i. 7.
[i] Mat. i. 18.
[k] Rom. xii. 2; Heb. x. 36.
[l] Ch. ii. 20, iii. 6, 17; Mk. iii. 4; Lu. vi. 9, 33, 35; Acts xiv. 17.
[m] Mat. xxii. 12, 34; Mk. i. 25, iv. 39; Lu. iv. 35; 1 Cor. ix 9; 1 Tim. v. 18.
[n] 1 Cor. xv. 34; Job xxxv. 16.
[o] Lu. xi. 40; Rom. ii. 20; Ps. xciii. 8.
[p] Cf. Ex. xxvi. 14; 2 Kings xvii. 19.
[q] See refs. to ver. 1.
[r] 1 Cor. x. 29; Gal. v. 13, etc.
[s] 1 Cor. vii. 22; Eph. vi. 6.
[t] Ex. xx. 12; Eph. vi. 2; 1 Tim. v. 3.
[u] Ch. v. 10.

[1] to every human institution
[2] sovereign
[3] through
[4] *or*, vengeance on
[5] the foolish
[6] freedom
[7] covering
[8] *or*, wickedness

The relative duties of Christians are now taken up as essentially concerned in that self-restraint and seemliness of conduct which was to be the best refutation of mischievous misrepresentation, and the best victory over adversaries. Civil and political relations are handled first of all as those which most expose Christians to the misjudgment of the heathen, and as containing secret elements of temptation to Christians themselves. The primary duty of submission is largely dealt with, and with good reason. The revolutionary aims of men who were 'turning the world upside down' (Acts xvii. 6) seems to have been among the earliest imputations thrown out against the adherents of the new faith. The spirit of resistance to the Roman power filled the breasts of the Jews of these times, and it was easy to identify the new sect with the old. There was much, too, in the characteristic beliefs of the Christians, their absolute loyalty to Christ the King, their faith in the equality of men, in a liberty with which Christ had made them free, in the approaching end of things, and the like, that might all too readily provoke in themselves a false attitude to the powers that were. 'Submission, therefore, was at this time a primary duty of all who wished to win over the heathen, and to save the Church from being overwhelmed in some burst of indignation which would be justified even to reasonable and tolerant Pagans as a political necessity' (Farrar, *Early Days of Christianity*, i. 162).

Ver. 13. **Submit yourselves.** The verb has this middle sense here rather than the purely passive force of 'be subjected,' or (as the R. V. puts it) 'be subject.'—**to every human institution.** The noun is variously rendered in our A. V. *creation* (Mark x. 16, xiii. 19; Rom. i. 20, viii. 22; 2 Pet. iii. 4; Rev. iii. 14), *creature* (Mark xvi. 15; Rom. i. 25, viii. 19, 20, 21, 39; 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15; Col. i. 15, 23; Heb. iv. 13), *building* (Heb. ix. 11), and *ordinance* (only here). In the New Testament it appears to denote the act of *creation* (Rom. i. 20), anything created, the *creature* (Rom. i. 25, viii. 39; Heb. iv. 13, etc.), the complex of created things, *the creation* (Mark x. 6, 13, 19; 2 Pet. iii. 4, etc.), mankind as a whole (Mark xvi. 15, etc.), *nature* as distinguished from man (Rom. viii. 19–21); while it is also used metaphorically of the 'new creature.' Hence some (*e.g.* de Wette, Erasmus, etc.) take the sense here to be = to every human creature; which manifestly would mean too much. In classical Greek the term, however, means the act of setting up, founding, or instituting something, and here, therefore, it is generally taken to mean something that is *established*, an institution or ordinance. It is not to be limited, however, to magistracy only, or to

persons in authority, or to magisterial laws (Luther), but is to be taken in the absolute sense, embracing under it all the different forms, kingship, magistracy, and the rest, which follow. It is described as 'human,' not exactly in the sense of being founded on the necessities of human society (Lillie), or as dealing only with things pertaining to man in contrast with other institutions which deal with things 'pertaining to God;' but either (as most interpret it) in the sense of being established *by man*, or (with Hofmann, and now Huther, etc.) in the sense of *applying to man*, ordering man's social and political life and relations. The latter view is favoured both by the fact that the cognate verb (the proper force of which reappears in this exceptional use of the noun) seems never to be used in the New Testament of merely human agency, and by the consideration that subjection to every ordinance which man himself may set up seems too wide a charge.—**for the Lord's sake.** The spirit which should animate us in practising such submission is thus solemnly added. And that is the spirit which recognises something Divine in human institutions (as Wiesinger perhaps rather vaguely puts it), or better, the spirit of consideration for Christ, who would be dishonoured by the opposite (Hofmann), or more simply, the thought that Christ wills it so. This pregnant statement of motive, therefore, elevates incalculably the duty itself. It implies that our submission will come short of its standard if the duty is viewed as a merely secular thing, or if the Divine purpose in civil institutions and Christ's interest in them are not acknowledged. It shows, too, that the very thing which might seem to weaken the sense of ordinary civil and political obligation, namely the peculiar duty of loyalty to Christ as Head, makes such obligation a more sacred and binding one to the Christian.—**whether to the king as sovereign.** Peter passes now from institutions in the abstract to their concrete representation in persons. The subjection which is inculcated to the former is inculcated to the latter, and in both cases with equal lack of qualification. He does not pause to pronounce on different kinds of government, constitutional, despotic, or other, or to adjust his statement of the duty in relation to the different characters of administrations and administrators. He takes the things and the persons as they then were, and, on high spiritual grounds, recommends an inoffensive and respectful attitude towards them. While he speaks of them with the same breadth of spirit as Paul (*e.g.* in Rom. xiii. 1–7), his standpoint is not quite the same. He does not deal with them here as Paul does there, in respect of what they are as powers 'ordained of God,' but simply in respect of this duty of *submission*. Hence he can speak absolutely. For the duty of submission must stand even when positive obedience cannot be rendered, and when (as in his own case, Acts iii. 19, 31, v. 28–32, 40–42) the mistake or abuse of 'the powers that be' forces us to say, 'We must obey God rather than men.' Peter's statement is something essentially different from any so-called doctrine of 'Divine right' or 'passive obedience.' Writing as he is to Roman provinces, he signalizes first of all the Roman Emperor. To him submission is due on the broad ground of his *sovereignty;* for no comparison is meant here between him and other rulers, such as the 'supreme' of the A. V. may suggest. He is designated by a title (occurring also in Matt. x. 18, xiv. 9; John xix. 15; 1 Tim. ii. 2, etc.) which would be appropriate enough on the lips of non-Romans, as the Greek language had no term exactly equivalent to the Latin word for *Emperor*, or in subject territories, but not in Rome itself. Horace (*Carm.* iv. 14) might name the Emperor Augustus lord of the world, but not 'king'! The title, though it continued to be applied to *priests* in the religious phraseology of Rome, ceased to be given to the head of the Roman state from the time of Tarquin's expulsion (Cic. *Rep.* 2, 20, 53), and the odium which clung to it all through the Republic followed it into the imperial times. Speaking of the so-called '*royal* laws' of the later empire, Gibbon (*Decline and Fall*, ch. xliv.) says 'the word (*lex regia*) was still more recent than the thing. The slaves of Commodus or Caracalla would have started at the name of royalty.'

Ver. 14. **or to governors,** *i.e.* administrators of provinces, procurators, proprætors, proconsuls, as also Asiarchs and other officials. Wycliffe renders it 'dukes;' Tyndale, Cranmer, the Genevan and the Rhemish, 'rulers.'—**as sent through him,** that is, through the *king;* not, as some (including even Calvin) strangely imagine, through *the Lord*,—a reference precluded not only by the parallelism with 'as supreme,' but also by the choice of the peculiar preposition 'through.' These governors should have our submission, because they are the king's delegates. —**for punishment of evil-doers and for commendation of well-doers.** The object, with a view to which they are sent with their delegated powers, is itself a reason for yielding them respect and subjection. They are meant to be on the side of order and right, and therefore on the side of God. The idea of their office is the repression (the word is a very strong one = vengeance, as Wycliffe puts it; it is rendered 'revenge' in the Rhemish Version) of the evil, and the protection and praise, *i.e.* the *honourable recognition* of the good (this last term, literally = well-doers, occurring only here in the New Testament). Peter says nothing of the questions which may be forced upon the Christian when the *idea* of the office is perverted, or when the governor sinks the office in his person and personal ends. Neither does he suggest that the duty of submission extends the length of abstention from the use of ordinary civil rights in withstanding the unjust action of rulers. Paul made the most of his rights as a Roman citizen, and carried his appeal from governor to Cæsar (Acts xvi. 37, xxii. 25, xxv. 11). He speaks, nevertheless, of the heathen magistrate as the 'minister of God,' and of the duty of being 'subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake' (Rom. xiii. 4, 5). The rule that injures is to be obeyed until it can be amended. The rule that offends morality and conscience is not to be obeyed; yet its penalties are to be submitted to.

Ver. 15. **for so is the will of God,** *i.e.* the will of God is to *the following effect* (cf. Matt. i. 18, where the same word is rendered 'on this wise'), namely, **that by well-doing ye silence the ignorance of the foolish men.** The 'well-doing,' which might mean doing deeds of *kindness* or mercy (Mark iii. 4; Acts xiv. 17), has here the more general sense of rectitude or dutifulness of conduct. The

verb 'silence' means literally to *muzzle*, and might be rendered 'gag.' But it has the secondary sense in its other New Testament occurrences, with the single exception of the two passages (1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18) in which the Old Testament prohibition of the *muzzling* of 'the ox that treadeth out the corn' is quoted; and, therefore, that sense should be retained here. Those other occurrences are all of picturesque interest—viz., Matt. xxii. 12, 34, in reference to the *speechlessness* of the man without the wedding garment, and the *silencing* of the Sadducees; Mark i. 25, Luke iv. 35, of Christ's word to the unclean spirit, 'Hold thy peace;' Mark iv. 39, of Christ's word to the raging sea, 'Be still.' The noun used for 'ignorance' here conveys the idea (which it also has in its only other New Testament occurrence, 1 Cor. xv. 34, and not unfrequently in the Classics) of wilful, habitual ignorance. There is a similar ethical sense in the 'foolish,' which here (as in Luke xi. 40, xii. 20) has the idea of culpable senselessness, which appears in such Old Testament passages as Ps. xiv. 1, 2, and which is expressed by a different adjective in Rom. i. 21. Peter's phrase, too, may mean not merely 'of foolish men' generally (as the A. V. and R. V. both put it), but of '*the* foolish men, with particular reference to those already mentioned as 'speaking against them as evil-doers.' The fact, therefore, that it was God's purpose to make the good lives of His servants a means of silencing the oppositions of their enemies, was a further reason for proving themselves loyal citizens and submissive subjects.

Ver. 16. **as free, and not as having your freedom for a covering of wickedness, but as bond-servants of God.** Liberty is apt to degenerate into licence. Milton speaks of those who

> 'Bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
> And still revolt when truth would set them free;
> Licence they mean when they cry liberty.'

The man possessed by the new sense of freedom in Christ might think it strange to be the servant of men, and of such men as heathen rulers were. Peter guards his readers against this secret danger of making their liberty in Christ a plea for insubordination in the State, and presents it both as a reason for order and subjection, and as the spirit in which these duties should be rendered. Because they were free they were to be submissive; for (the 'and' introduces an explanation of the 'free') their freedom was not to be used as a means for concealing or palliating wickedness, and they themselves, while free, were also God's bond-servants and under obligation to fulfil His will. 'The freedom of Christians is a bond freedom, because they have been set free in order to be bond-servants to God; and a free bondage, because they obey God and Magistrate not of constraint, but spontaneously' (Gerhard). The 'cloke' of the A. V. is apt to mislead. The Greek term simply means a 'covering,' and is used in the Old Testament to denote the covering of badgers' skins upon the tabernacle (Ex. xxvi. 14). It has no reference (as Beza strangely supposes) to the *cap* put on by manumitted slaves. Neither does it mean 'cloak,' except in the figurative sense of something that hides the true character of conduct. The English Versions mostly give 'malice' or 'maliciousness' as the rendering of the other noun,—in this following, and perhaps misunderstanding, the Vulgate. The Bishops' Bible, however, gives 'naughtiness,' and, though the word has also the more specific sense, and not a few interpreters prefer it here, this more general meaning of 'wickedness,' 'evil conduct,' is more in harmony with the context. (See also on ii. 1; and for the idea as a whole, compare 2 Pet. ii. 19; Gal. v. 13; as also 1 Cor. viii. 10; Rom. xiv. 13.)—The connection of this 16th verse is uncertain. Our view of its application will be modified according as we relate it to what precedes or to what follows. Some take it as an introduction to ver. 17, and as stating, therefore, that Christian freedom means the giving of their dues to all the four subjects distinguished there (Steiger, Lachmann, Plumptre, etc.). But it is not easy to see how the statement of ver. 16 bears particularly on such a precept as the third in ver. 17, 'Fear God.' Others connect it with ver. 15; in which case its import is that the 'well-doing' by which adversaries are to be silenced must be in the exercise of a liberty implying freedom from deceit, and rejoicing in service (so Tyndale, Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, Hofmann, Wiesinger, Alford, etc.). A third connection is also proposed (by Chrysostom, Bengel, Schott, Huther, etc.), namely, with ver. 13; in which case it becomes a definition of the general injunction, 'Submit yourselves,' which rules the whole section. This last is on the whole the best, as giving the principle that the submission which was enjoined in all these civil and political relations was to be rendered not in an abject spirit, or with concealed motives, but in consistency with a liberty in Christ which was also free subjection to God's will and entire loyalty to His service.

Ver. 17. **Honour all men.** A group of four precepts now follows, which Leighton compares to 'a constellation of very bright stars near together.' They are remarkable for the clear-cut form of expression in which they are cast, and for their absolute tone. Each is perfectly intelligible in itself. But it is not easy to discover the relation, if any, in which they stand to each other, and the reason for their introduction at this particular point. The first deals with what is due to men *as such*. For the 'all men' is not to be limited to 'all to whom honour is due' (Bengel), nor to all *governors* such as those already mentioned. Apart from all questions of station or even quality, and besides what we owe them in the distinctive relations of brotherhood and magistracy, all men are to receive our *honour*. By this is meant not exactly the 'submission' previously enjoined, nor even the somewhat conditioned esteem which Huther (with Weiss, Wiesinger, Schott, etc.) calls 'recognising the worth which any one possesses, and acting on that recognition,' but, more broadly still, the practical acknowledgment of the dignity of man as such, and of his natural claims upon our consideration and respect. It is the recognition of what all men are as bearers of the Divine image, 'the idea of a dignity belonging to man as man,' which, as Neander says, 'was unknown to the times preceding Christianity' (see also Dr. John Brown *in loc.*).—**love the brotherhood.** The followers of Christ were distinguished by Himself from the mass of men as *brethren* (Matt. xxiii. 8), and that name they seem to have adopted naturally as their own earliest designa-

tion. The 'brethren' in their social or corporate capacity are the 'brotherhood,' and to this fellowship we owe the deeper debt of personal affection. The precept has been given already in rich detail (i. 22). It is re-introduced here, however, in an entirely new connection.—**fear God.** With this compare Christ's own words in Luke xii. 4, 5, and see also note on i. 17. The reverential awe which is due from the subject to supreme authority, and from the child to supreme perfection, which makes it to the one a dread and to the other a pain to offend, is what is to be rendered (cf. for its New Testament position, Heb. xiii. 28; 2 Cor. vii. 1, 11; Phil. ii. 12, etc.) to Him who is the Maker of all men, the Father of the brotherhood, the King of kings.—**honour the king.** That is, in the practical form of fealty, and, where that is impossible, in submission. The two latter precepts occur together, and in the same order, in Prov. xxiv. 21.—Are these four precepts so many pearls unstrung? Or are they a connected series, in which the one limits or defines the other? By some they are regarded as four particulars in which the previous 'well-doing' (ver. 15) is to be exhibited. In this case, too, a climax is usually discovered in the first three, while the fourth is taken to be a return to the relation which suggested the general statement of 'well-doing' (Huther, etc.). Others think the first a general statement, of which the three following are applications (Alford, etc.). But this can scarcely suit the *third* at least. Others consider them to cover the two great departments of life, the civil and the religious, and to show how duty in the former is limited or defined by duty in the latter (Schott). If any inherent connection is to be found at all, it is in this last direction that it is to be sought. The closing precept indicates that Peter has still in view the civil and political duties. The verse, therefore, is introduced perhaps as a final qualification or explanation of his statement of these duties. It is appended as a safeguard against the supposition that such 'submission' to rulers must interfere with other obligations. The general principle of giving to *all* their dues, be means, is unaffected by what has been said. Honour to men as such, and the deeper sentiment of love to the brotherhood, reverence to God and honour to the king, are in no manner of conflict. The one is not to be rendered at the cost of the other.—The last three precepts are expressed in the *present* tense, as dealing with habitual modes of conduct. The first precept is given in a tense which does not express habit or continuance. The difference is explained by some (*e.g.* Alford) as due to the fact that the *honour* which is to be rendered to *all men* is presented here as a due which is to be given promptly and at once to each as occasion arises.

CHAPTER II. 18–25.

Duties of Christian Slaves, and these specially in the light of Christ's Example.

18 [a]SERVANTS, *be* [b]subject[1] to *your* [c]masters with[2] all fear; not only to the good and [d]gentle,[3] but also to the
19 [e]froward.[4] For this *is* [f]thankworthy,[5] if a man for [g]conscience toward God[6] [h]endure [i]grief,[7] suffering wrongfully.
20 For what [k]glory[8] *is it*, if, when ye be [l]buffeted for your faults,[9] ye shall [m]take it patiently? but if, when [n]ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take[10] it patiently, this *is* acceptable with
21 God. For even[11] hereunto were ye [o]called; because Christ also suffered for us,[12] leaving us[13] an [p]example, that ye should
22 [q]follow his [r]steps: who [s]did no sin, neither was [t]guile [u]found
23 in his mouth: who, when he was [v]reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered,[14] he [w]threatened not, but [x]committed *him-*
24 *self*[15] to him that [y]judgeth [z]righteously: who his own self[15]

[a] Gen. ix. 25, 26; Lu. xvi. 13; Acts x. 7; Rom. xiv. 4.
[b] See refs. at ver. 13.
[c] 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2, 2 Tim. ii. 21; Tit. ii. 9.
[d] Phil. iv. 5; 1 Tim. iii. 3; Tit. iii. 2; Jas. iii. 17.
[e] Lu. iii. 5; Acts ii. 40; Phil. ii. 15.
[f] Lu. vi. 32; Sir. xx. 16.
[g] Ch. iii. 16, 21; Heb. x. 2. Also Jo. viii. 9; Acts xxiii. 1, xxiv. 16; Rom. ii. 15, ix. 1, xiii. 5; 1 Cor. viii. 7, 10, 12; 1 Tim. i. 5, etc.
[h] 1 Cor. x. 13; 2 Tim. iii 11.
[i] Phil. ii. 27; Prov. xv. 13.
[k] Job xxviii. 22, xxx. 8.
[l] Mat. xxvi. 67; Mk. xiv. 65; 1 Cor. iv. 11; 2 Cor. xii. 7.
[m] Mat. x 22, xxiv. 13; Mk. xiii. 13; Rom. xii. 12; 1 Cor. xiii. 7; 2 Tim. ii. 10, 12; Heb. x. 32, xii. 2, 3, 7; Jas. i. 12, v. 11.
[n] See refs. at ver. 15.
[o] See refs. at ver. 9.
[p] Cf. 2 Macc. ii. 28.
[q] Mk. xvi. 20; 1 Tim. v. 10, 24; Job xxxi. 7.
[r] Rom. iv. 12; 2 Cor. xii. 18.
[s] Jo. viii. 34; 2 Cor. xi. 7; Jas. v. 15; 1 Jo. iii. 4, 8, 9.
[t] See refs. at ver. 1.
[u] Mat. i. 18; Lu. xvii. 18; Acts viii. 40; Rom. vii. 10; Rev. xiv. 5.
[v] Jo. ix. 28; Acts xxiii. 4; 1 Cor. iv. 12.
[w] Acts iv. 17.
[x] Mat. v. 25.
[y] See refs. at ch. i. 17.
[z] Lu. xxiii. 41; 1 Cor. xv. 34; 1 Thes. ii. 10; Tit. ii. 12.

[1] submit yourselves. *R. V. gives* be in subjection
[2] *literally*, in
[3] *or*, considerate
[4] *or*, perverse
[5] acceptable
[6] on account of *the* consciousness of God
[7] pains
[8] credit
[9] if, when ye do wrong, and are buffeted
[10] shall take
[11] *omit* even
[12] you
[13] when suffering
[14] left it
[15] *or*, himself

[a] bare [16] our sins in his own body [17] on [18] the [b] tree, that we, being [c] dead [19] to sins, should live unto [d] righteousness: by
25 whose [e] stripes [20] ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; [21] but are now [f] returned [22] unto the [g] Shepherd and [h] Bishop [23] of your souls.

[a] Heb. ix. 28; Isa. liii. 11, 12. [b] Acts v. 30, x. 39; Gal. iii. 3. [c] Rom. vi. 2, 11; Gal. ii. 19 (for idea and construction).

[d] Rom. vi. 2, 11; Gal. ii. 19. Zech. xiii. 7; Mat. xxvi. 31. [e] Isa. liii. 20. [f] Isa. xlv. 22; Joel ii. 12. [g] Jo. x. 11, 14; Heb. xiii. 20; [h] Acts xx. 28; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 7.

[16] *or, with the margin of R. V.*, carried up [17] his body
[18] *or, as A. V. and R. V. in margin*, to [19] *or, with R. V.*, having died
[20] *or, with the margin of R. V.*, bruise
[21] *or, as R. V.*, ye were going astray like sheep [22] *or*, ye did turn yourselves
[23] *or*, Overseer, *as R. V. in margin*

The household is next dealt with as an institution obviously included under the 'every ordinance of man' (ver. 13). And in the house the duty of servants is first declared. The bond-servant formed an extremely numerous class both in Greek and in Roman society. Rich citizens possessed slaves sometimes by the thousand. Pliny tells us, for example, of a single proprietor, Claudius Isidorus, leaving by will upwards of four thousand slaves (*Nat. Hist.* xxxiii. 47). They occupied a position of the most miserable helplessness. Of himself the slave had nothing, and was nothing. In the eye of the law he had no rights. Varro, 'the most learned of the Romans,' in a treatise written only between thirty and forty years before the Christian era, gives a classification of 'implements,' and first among these appears the slave (*De Re Rustica*, i. 17). Aristotle defines the slave as a 'live chattel' (*Pol.* i. 4). In his case there could be no such thing as relationships. Not till Constantine's time did the law begin to recognise marriage and family rights among this class. His master's power over him was absolute. No punishment—the scourge, mutilation, crucifixion, exposure to wild beasts—was too much for him. Not till Hadrian's time was the power of life and death taken from the master. Though there is ample reason to believe that often personal kindliness secured for the slave what the law denied him, history has many a page dark with the record of the cruel woes and tragic wrongs of the slave. It is no wonder, therefore, that when Christianity entered with its Gospel of freedom and its abolition of all distinctions between bond and free in Christ, and made numerous converts, as we know it did, from this class, questions both grave and numerous arose as to the relation of the Christianized slave to the heathen master and the heathen law. Hence the distinct place given to the slave in Peter's counsels. Hence, too, the large space given by Paul to the slave's matters, not only in the Epistle to Philemon, but in important sections of other Epistles (*e.g.* 1 Cor. vii. 20–24, xii. 13; Gal. iii. 28; Eph. vi. 5–8; Col. iii. 11, 22–25; 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2; Tit. ii. 9, 10) addressed to very different parties.

Ver. 18. **Servants, submit yourselves to your masters.** The term for 'servants' here is different from the one by which Paul so frequently expresses the idea of the bond-servant. It occurs only thrice again in the N. T., once in Paul's writings (Rom. xiv. 4), and twice in Luke's (Gospel, xvi. 13; Acts x. 7). It means, literally, 'one belonging to one's house,' 'a domestic,' and in Acts x. 7 it is translated by our A. V. 'household servant.' In the best period of classical literature (*e.g.* Herod. viii. 106; Soph. *Trach.* 894), as also at least occasionally in the Apocrypha (Sirach iv. 30, vi. 11), it is applied not unfrequently to all the inmates of one's house, or to the 'family' in the present sense. Hence some suppose that in the present passage it includes all domestics, bond and free. Others (Steiger, etc.) think it is selected in order to cover the class of freedmen who contributed largely to the earliest converts. But as the more usual sense of the word is that of 'slave,' as it has that meaning in such passages of the LXX. and the Apocrypha as Ex. xxi. 27, Prov. xvii. 2, Ecclus. x. 25, and as that idea is certainly most germane to the context here, it is generally taken to denote bond-servants in the present passage. Peter selects it probably with a conciliatory purpose, as a more courteous term than the common one. It presents the slave in closer relation to the family, and so conveys a softened view of his position. The phrase 'submit yourselves,' or 'make yourselves subject,' is really in the participle form, 'submitting yourselves,' and is connected, therefore, either with the 'honour all men' of ver. 17 (Alford, de Wette, etc.), with the general injunction of vers. 11, 12, or, most naturally, with the 'submit yourselves' of ver. 13. The slave's duty is thus given as an integral section of the great law of subjection to 'every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.' The word used for 'masters' conveys the idea of absolute power. It is used in the present application elsewhere only in the Pastoral Epistles (see refs.). It repeatedly occurs as a *Divine* title, 'Lord' (Luke ii. 29; Acts iv. 24; 2 Pet. ii. 1; Jude 4; Rev. vi. 10).—**in all fear.** Statement of the spirit or temper in which the subjection is to be made good. Is the 'fear' which is here intended fear towards God or towards man? On the ground that Peter afterwards (iii. 6, 14) warns against the fear of man, that Paul (Col. iii. 22) appends the definition 'fearing the Lord' to similar counsels to servants, and that the term occurs at times without any explanatory addition in the sense of religious fear (i. 17), some good interpreters (Weiss, Dr. John Brown, etc.) take the idea here to be = give this submission in a pious spirit, in reverential awe of God. But the next clause seems to define the fear here under the other aspect, as the feeling proper to the position of subjection, even under trying circumstances. It means, therefore, careful solicitude to

give faithful service, 'shrinking from transgressing the master's will' (Huther). This is confirmed by the use of the stronger phrase, 'with fear and trembling,' in the Pauline parallel (Eph. vi. 5), which (as also in 1 Cor. ii. 3; 2 Cor. vii. 15, and even Phil. ii. 15) appears to express the broad idea of watchful, nervous anxiety to do what is right.—**not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.** The 'fear' has been put absolutely, '*all* fear,' as extending to everything which can make demands upon the servant's loyalty and patience. The same is now required in reference to cases where it is subjected to the most painful strain. It is not to be affected by the harshness of the yoke, but is due equally to two very different types of master. The one type is described by two adjectives, which are represented fairly well by the 'good and gentle' of the A. V. The second of these, however, means more than simply 'gentle.' Adjective and noun are of somewhat limited occurrence in the N. T., and are variously rendered by our A. V., *e.g.* **gentleness, gentle,** here and in 2 Cor. x. 1; Tit. iii. 2; Jas. iii. 17; *clemency*, Acts xxiv. 4; *moderation*, Phil. iv. 5; *patient*, 1 Tim. iii. 3. It expresses the disposition which lets equity temper justice, is careful not to press rights of law to the extreme of moral wrongs, and shrinks from rigorously exacting under all circumstances its legal due. It might be rendered 'considerate,' or 'forbearing.' Wycliffe gives *mild;* Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan, *courteous;* the Rhemish, *modest*. The other type is described by an adjective, which means literally *crooked, twisting* (in which sense it is applied, *e.g.*, to the river Mæander in *Apoll. Rhod.* 4, 1541), and then ethically what is *not straightforward*. Besides the present passage, it occurs only thrice in the N. T.,—in Luke iii. 5; Phil. ii. 15 (in which cases the A. V. gives *crooked*); and Acts ii. 40 (where the A. V. has *untoward*). So here it means not exactly *capricious* (as Luther puts it) or *wayward* (the Rhemish), or even *froward* (as both the A. V. and the R. V. give it after Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan), but 'harsh' or 'perverse,' the disposition that lacks the reasonable and considerate, and makes a tortuous use of the lawful. In ecclesiastical Greek it is used to denote the Evil One.

Ver. 19. **For this is acceptable.** The 'this' refers to the case immediately to be stated. The Greek for 'acceptable' here is the usual word for 'grace.' Hence some take the sense to be=it is a work of grace, or a gift of grace (Steiger, Schott); others,=it is a sign of grace, a proof that you are Christians indeed (Wiesinger); others,= it conciliates or wins grace for you; Roman Catholic theologians using it in support of their theory of works of supererogation. In the present passage, however, it is evidently used in the non-theological sense. We have to choose, therefore, between three ideas, that of *gracious* or attractive (as in Luke iv. 22; Col. iv. 6), that of *favour, i.e.* securing favour with one (so Huther), or that of *thankworthy*, as the A. V. puts it, or better, 'acceptable,' as the R. V. gives it in harmony with the repetition of the word in the end of ver. 20. Though the second of these can plead the analogy of the O. T. phrase, 'find favour, or grace with one' (Gen. vi. 8, xviii. 3, xxx. 27, etc.), and its N. T. application (Luke i. 30, ii. 52; Acts ii. 47), the third is on the whole the best, as most accordant with both the idea and the terms of Christ's own declaration in Luke vi. 32, which Peter seems here to have in mind. For the present, too, the statement is given generally, such endurance being presented as a thing acceptable in itself, and the person (whether God or the master) being left unnamed.—**if on account of** (his) **consciousness of God one endureth pains while suffering wrongfully.** Endurance, therefore, is not of itself a 'thankworthy' thing. In the case of any one, slave or other, it is so only if it is endurance of *wrong*, and only if it is animated by one's sense of his relation to God, not if it is due to prudential considerations or of the nature of a sullen, stoical accommodation to the inevitable. The motive which gives nobility to endurance is put in the foreground. By this 'consciousness of God' is meant neither exactly the 'conscience toward God' of the A. V. and R. V., nor 'conscientiousness before God,' far less 'the consciousness which God has of us' (as some strangely put it), but that consciousness which we have of God, which at once inspires the sense of duty and elevates the idea of duty. Though the Greek word is always translated 'conscience' in the A. V., it cannot be said ever to have in the Bible precisely the sense which is attached to it in modern philosophical systems. Neither can it be said to convey even in the Pauline writings quite the same idea as in the language of the Stoics, although it is possible that Paul may have been familiar with the ethical phraseology of that school (see Lightfoot's Essay on *St. Paul and Seneca* in his Comm. on Philippians). Not unfrequently, however, it covers much the same conception as the 'conscience' of our current popular speech. The idea at its root is knowledge,—knowledge specially of the moral quality of our own acts. It is the 'understanding applied to the distinction of good and evil, as reason is the same applied to the distinction of truth and falsehood' (see Godet on Rom. ii. 15). Though it occurs often in the writings of Paul, repeatedly in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and thrice in Peter (here and iii. 16, 21), it is never found in the Gospels, except in the dubious section John viii. 9. The Old Testament expressed a similar idea by a different term, namely the 'heart.' Hence this word occurs only once in the LXX., viz. in Eccles. x. 20, and there it has a sense only approaching that of the moral consciousness, namely, that of the 'quiet inner region of one's thoughts.' As this is put emphatically first, another quality of acceptable endurance is equally emphasized by the 'wrongfully' (the only instance of the adverb in the N. T.) which closes the sentence. The 'grief' of the A. V. should be *griefs, grievances*, or *pains*. It carries us back to the 'pained' of i. 6, and points to objective external inflictions. It is the phrase used in Isa. liii. 4. The verb 'endure' here (which occurs only twice again in the N. T., 1 Cor. x. 13; 2 Tim. iii. 11) means to *bear up against*, and expresses perhaps the effort required to withstand the natural impulse to rise against injustice.

Ver. 20. **For what glory is it** (or, *what kind of glory is it*). This particular term for 'glory,' with the general sense of *credit*, though of very frequent use in the Classics, occurs only this once in the N. T.—**if, when ye do wrong and are buffeted, ye shall take it patiently.** Peter has

more in view here than the criminal's stolid endurance of a punishment which he cannot escape (so de Wette). He means that even *patient* endurance, if it is the endurance of what is deserved, can bring no credit to one. It is the simple discharge of a duty that is matter of course (Matt. v. 47). The 'ye shall take it patiently,' therefore, of the A. V. and R. V. correctly conveys the idea. The two phrases, 'do wrong' and 'are buffeted,' express things in the relation of cause and effect. The latter verb is peculiar to the N. T. and ecclesiastical Greek. It is not found even in the LXX. It is peculiarly apt here, where the treatment of slaves is in question. It refers literally to blows with the hand, 'the punishment, and a prompt one, inflicted upon slaves' (Bengel).—**but if, when ye do well and suffer, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.** The A. V., along with various other Versions, erroneously drops the future, '*shall* take it,' here. The 'well-doing' intended here seems to be the patient, dutiful behaviour of the slave, although the verb properly expresses the doing of good to one, or benefiting one. Some editors insert 'for' before 'this is acceptable;' in which case we should have to fill up the statement thus: 'This is truly a credit to you, for this is acceptable in God's sight.'—As the ruthless system of slavery reacted upon ancient society in forms so terrible that it became a proverb with the Romans, 'As many slaves, so many enemies,' so the risk of a fatal breach between Christianized slaves and heathen masters was one of the gravest perils which had to be faced. The new faith excited so many questions in the slave's breast, questions as to his personal rights and dignity, the extent to which he was called to be a sufferer of wrong, the possibility of serving such masters with a pure conscience, questions fitted to excite the revolutionary spirit, that his case was the case in which it was at once least easy and most necessary to plant deep the conviction of the paramount Christian obligation of submission for the Lord's sake. Hence Peter cannot yet quit this matter, but will carry it up to still higher reasons, to those found in the idea of the Christian calling and in Christ's own example. He gives no hint that the slave should break with his bondage. Neither does he give him over to political impotence or social helplessness. He sets before him principles on which he is to quit himself like a Christian, abiding in his calling, principles which also were to work like solvents on the system itself, and gradually to secure its extinction without revolution. 'Nothing indeed marks the Divine character of the Gospel more than its perfect freedom from any appeal to the spirit of political revolution. The Founder of Christianity and His apostles were surrounded by everything which could tempt human reformers to enter on revolutionary courses. . . . Nevertheless our Lord and His apostles said not a word against the powers and institutions of that evil world. Their attitude towards them all was that of deep spiritual hostility, and of entire political submission' (see Goldwin Smith, *Does the Bible sanction American Slavery*, p. 55,—a brief but invaluable discussion).

Ver. 21. **For unto this were ye called.** Patient endurance of undeserved suffering should be deemed no strange thing (cf. iv. 12). Painful as it was, it was involved in their Christian vocation. In being called by God to the grace of Christ, they were called to take up His cross (Matt. x. 38, xvi. 24, etc.). The fact appeals with special force to slaves; for He Himself 'took upon Him the form of a servant' (Phil. ii. 7). For the turn of expression here, cf. Col. iii. 15; 1 Thess. iii. 3; 2 Thess. ii. 14. The A. V. needlessly inserts *even*, as Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Bishops' Bible introduce a *verily* which is not in the text. —**because Christ also suffered for you.** The best authorities give the second person here instead of the 'for us' of the Received Text. The phrase means here, too, not 'in your stead,' but 'in your behalf,' or 'for your good.' The idea is that the servant cannot expect to be greater than the Master. They do not stand alone in suffering. They are only called to endure as Christ endured. He suffered, and that, too, not on His own account, but in their cause and for their benefit.—**to you leaving behind** (Him) **an example.** The pronoun (which again should be '*you*,' not '*us*') is put with a strange prominence first, taking up the immediately preceding 'for you,' and applying the fact most emphatically to these bond-servants. The 'leaving behind' is expressed by a verb which is found nowhere else in the N. T., but which occurs in reference to death in the apocryphal Book of Judith (viii. 7). The idea of an *example* is conveyed by a term, of which this is the one N. T. instance, and which denotes properly the sketch given to students of art to copy, or trace over and fill in, or the head-lines containing the letters of the alphabet, which were set for children who were learning writing. The idea of an *example* is expressed by different terms in John xiii. 15 (where it = sign, or pattern), and 2 Thess. iii. 9 (where it = type; cf. also 1 Cor. x. 11). The object of this bequest is next stated,—**in order that ye might follow**; or, *follow closely*, as the verb strictly means, which occurs again in Mark xvi. 20; 1 Tim. v. 10, 24 (in this last verse pointing to the closeness with which some men's sins pursue them to judgment).—**his steps**, or *footprints*. Compare also Rom. iv. 12, 2 Cor. xii. 18, the only other occurrences in the N. T. The change of figure from a teacher setting a copy to be imitated, to a guide making a track to be intently kept by those coming after him, is to be noticed. Huther calls attention to the fact that, except in 1 John ii. 6 (where the idea is more general), it is with particular reference to 'His self-abasement in suffering and death' that the N. T. presents Christ as an example, *e.g.* John xiii. 15, xv. 12; Phil. ii. 5; Heb. xii. 2; 1 John iii. 16.

Ver. 22. **who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.** Of all the apostles, Peter, with the single exception of John, had known the Christ of history most intimately, and had seen Him in the circumstances, both public and private, most certain to betray the sinfulness of common human nature, had such been latent in Him. Peter had felt, too, not less strongly than others, how the type of holiness which Christ taught conflicted with his own traditional Jewish notion of a holiness bound up with the rigid observance of Sabbath laws and ceremonial rules of life. But with what quiet strength of fixed conviction does he proclaim Christ's blamelessness! Nor can Peter's confession of that sinlessness, as he lingers over it in this section, be said to come behind either Paul's

'who knew no sin' (2 Cor. v. 21), or John's 'in Him is no sin' (1 John iii. 5). It is the affirmation of a freedom not only from open but also from hidden sin, a sinlessness not in deed only, but also in word, and indeed (as the 'guile' implies, on which see also at ii. 1) in thought. The language, as Bengel suggests, is peculiarly pertinent to the case of slaves with their strong temptations to practise deception. The choice of the verb 'was found' or 'was discovered' (see also on i. 7) is in harmony with the idea of a sinlessness which had stood the test of suspicious sifting and scrutiny. The statement is given, too, with the direct and positive force of simple historical tenses, which may imply (as Alford puts it) that *in no instance* did He ever do the wrong deed, or say the guileful word. All this, however, is in the form not of words of Peter's own, but of a reproduction (taken exactly from the LXX., only that 'sin' appears here, while 'iniquity' or 'lawlessness' appears there) of the great prophetic picture of Jehovah's servant in Isaiah (liii. 9).

Ver. 23. **who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not.** Peter continues to speak partly under the influence of Isaiah's description (liii. 7 seems clearly in his mind, although he no longer reproduces the very words), and partly under that of personal recollection of what he had seen in Christ. The tenses change now from the simple historical past to imperfects expressive of sustained action. Most interpreters notice the climax from the *reviling*, or injury by word, to the more positive *suffering*, and from the abstinence from returning reviling in *kind* (the verb 'reviled not again' is another word peculiar to Peter) to abstinence even from *threats* of retaliation where actual retaliation was impossible. The sentence, therefore, exhibits Christ's example in suffering in its quality of silence and patience, as the former verse dealt with the quality of innocence.—**but left it to him that judgeth righteously.** The Rhemish Version, following the singular reading of the Vulgate, renders 'to him that judgeth him *unjustly*,' as if Pilate were the judge in view. Here, as in i. 17, God the Father's prerogative 'of judgment' is introduced. There the impartial righteousness of His judgment was a reason for a walk in godly fear. Here it is the ground of assurance for the innocent sufferer. What is it, however, that Christ is said to have committed to this Righteous Judge? Many interpreters (*e.g.* Winer, de Wette, etc.) and Versions (including Wycliffe, the Rhemish, and both the A. V. and the R. V. in the text) supply *himself* as the object of the committal. This, however, is to give the active verb a reflexive force; of which there is no example in the case of this verb, Mark iv. 24, which is appealed to, not being really in point. Hence others make it = committed his *judgment*, or his *cause* (so Gerhard, Calvin, Beza, the Syriac, Tyndale, and the margin of both the A. V. and the R. V.), or his *punishment* (the Genevan), or his *vengeance* (Cranmer). The unnamed object, however, should naturally be supplied from the things dealt with in the immediate context. These are clearly the wrongs patiently endured by Christ. With Luther, therefore, etc., we may best render it indefinitely 'left it,' understanding the '*it*' to refer to the subjection to *reviling* and *suffering* just mentioned. This is better than (with Alford) to make it = committed His *revilers* and *injurers*; although we might thus secure an allusion to Christ's prayer in behalf of His enemies (Luke xxiii. 34).

Ver. 24. **who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree**, or, as in margin of the R. V., *carried up . . . to the tree*. From Christ's fellowship with us in suffering, and from His innocence and patience as a Sufferer, we are now led up to the crowning glory of the example which He has left of an endurance not for wrong-doing, but for well-doing. What He endured was not only without personal cause or personal demerit on His own side, but in the cause and for the demerit of others. The vicariousness of His sufferings adds to His example a power and grandeur higher still than it receives from the qualities already instanced in it. So far, therefore, as vicarious suffering is a possibility to us, this new statement applies to the example which we are to study in Christ. It is clear, however, that in taking up here the idea of suffering 'in your *behalf*' with which he had started, and showing what that involved, Peter speedily carries us beyond the idea of example, and into a region in which Christ stands alone as a Sufferer. He places us now before the Cross itself, and in words each of which is of utmost value, touches upon the great mystery of the relation in which Christ's sufferings stand to our sins. The phrase 'to the tree' points us at once to the climax of His vicarious suffering, His death upon the Cross. In designating the Cross 'the *tree*,' Peter is supposed by some (*e.g.* Bengel) to have selected a term which would appeal with peculiar force to *slaves*, their class being familiar with punishment by the *tree* in various forms, the cross, the fork, etc. Peter, however, uses the same term in Acts v. 30, x. 39, where there is no such reference to slaves. So here he adopts it simply as it had been suggested by such Old Testament passages as Deut. xxi. 22. It is probable, too, that he has in view those ideas of *criminality* and *shame*, and the position of one under the curse of the law, with which the word is associated in the Old Testament passage. The same great Passional of Isaiah (specially liii. 4, 11, 12) is also manifestly in Peter's mind, some of its characteristic terms, as rendered by the LXX., reappearing here. No interpretation, therefore, can be just which fails to be in harmony with the prophetic basis of the statement. How, then, is the central phrase 'bare our sins' to be understood? The verb occurs indeed in the New Testament (see also on ver. 7) in the simple sense of *carrying up*, or *bringing up*, as *e.g.* of Christ *bringing* Peter and James and John up to the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 1), of Christ being *carried up* into heaven (Luke xxiv. 51), etc. It has also the sense, frequent enough in the Classics, of *sustaining*. Here, however, its accessories shut us up to a choice between two technical meanings, namely, that of *offering up*, and that of *bearing punishment*. Hence some (including the great name of Luther) take the sense to be 'made an offering of our sins on the tree,' or 'brought our sins as an offering to the tree.' In favour of this, it may be urged that the same verb has already been used in this sense in ii. 5 (as it is again in Heb. vii. 27, xiii. 15; cf. also Jas. ii. 21), and that there is a distinct analogy in the Old Testament formula used of the priest offering on, or bringing offerings to, the

altar (Lev. xiv. 20; 2 Chron. xxiv. 16). But there are fatal objections to this view, as *e.g.* the unexampled conception of the sins being themselves the offering; the equally unexampled description of the Cross as an altar (notwithstanding Heb. xiii. 10); the fact that it was not *upon* but *before* the altar that sacrificial victims under the Old Testament were put to death; and the difference thus created between Peter's use and Isaiah's use of the same terms. The other sense, viz. that of *bearing the consequences*, or *paying the penalty*, of sin, is supported by the weightiest considerations, as *e.g.* the fact that the verb in question is one of those by which the Greek Version represents the Hebrew verb, which (when it has 'sin' or 'iniquity' as its object) means to bear punishment for sin (whether one's own or that of others) in numerous passages both of the Pentateuch and the prophets (*e.g.* Lev. xix. 17, xx. 19, xxiv. 15; Num. v. 31, xiv. 34; Ezek. iv. 5, xiv. 10, xvi. 58, xxiii. 35); the New Testament analogy in Heb. ix. 28; the harmony with what is said of the Servant of Jehovah in Isa. liii. The addition *in His body* brings out the fact that this endurance of the punishment of our sins was discharged by Him, not remotely as was the case with the Israelite under the Law who brought a victim distinct from himself, but directly in His own person. The phrase *to* (or, *on to*, not *on*) *the tree* is not inconsistent with this meaning. It gives the whole sentence the force of a picture representing Christ with our sins upon Him, and carrying them with Him on to the final act of penal endurance on the Cross. The statement, therefore, is more than a figure for securing the forgiveness of sin, and means more than bearing sin sympathetically, burdening one's heart with the sense of sin, or destroying the power of sin in us. It involves the two ideas of sacrifice and substitution; the latter having additional point given it by the 'Himself' (or, as our E. V. puts it, 'His own self'), which is set both emphatically first and in antithetical relation to '*our* sins.' It can scarcely mean less than what Weiss recognises when he says: 'It is plain, therefore, that in consequence of Isa. liii., Peter regards this sin-bearing of Christ in behalf of sinners as the means whereby sin has been removed from them, and by which, therefore, the stain of guilt has been effaced' (*Bib. Theol.* i. p. 233, Eng. Trans.). It gives no theory, however, of *how* this sin-bearing carried such efficacy with it.—**in order that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness.** The ransom, from the necessity of ourselves bearing the consequences, or legal liabilities of our sins, however, is not an end to itself. It is done with a view to the killing of the practical power of sin in us, and to our leading a new life. A *death unto* the sins which He bore is given here as the position into which we were brought once for all by Christ's great act of sin-bearing. Hence the use of the historical past 'having died.' The idea of this *death*, though it is expressed by a term not found elsewhere in the New Testament (which some wrongly render 'being removed away from'), is the same as the Pauline idea (Rom. vi. 2, 11). And through this death comes the new life which is dedicated to the service of 'righteousness;' which term has here, of course, not the theological sense of *justification* or a *justified state*, which some still give it, but the ethical sense which it has, *e.g.*, in Rom. vi. 16, 18, 19, etc.—**by whose bruise ye were healed.** The word rendered both by the A. V. and by the R. V. 'stripes,' occurs only this once in the New Testament. In the original it is a collective singular, and means properly *a weal*, the bruise left by blows or by the scourge. Hence it is thought that Peter uses it with reference to the slave's punishment. He takes it, however, simply from Isa. liii. 5, adopting what applies properly only to the effects of one kind of punishment as a vivid figure of Christ's sufferings as a whole, and passing at the same time naturally from the 'we' and 'our' to the direct personal address 'ye,' which so distinguishes the Epistle. Bengel calls this 'a paradoxical expression of the apostle.' It gives the double paradox of grace—*healed* with a *stripe*, and healed with what is laid upon another than the patient himself. The moral sickness of sin is translated into the health of righteousness by the pain of the Sinless.

Ver. 25. **For ye were going astray as sheep.** Continuing Isaiah's strain, Peter adds a reason for what he has just said of a restoration to righteousness, or soundness of life. The figure passes from that of sickness into that of error. As the better-sustained reading gives the participle in the masculine (not in the neuter, as if qualifying the 'sheep'), it is necessary to put the comparison otherwise than it is given in the A. V. The readers are compared simply to *sheep*, not to *wandering sheep*. That is to say, they are said themselves to have been once wanderers, and in that state of estrangement from God to have been like sheep,—helpless, foolish, and heedless. Thus the figure stands in Isa. liii. 6, and so here it connects itself at once with the subsequent idea of *returning to a Head*. The use of the sheep as a figure of man in his natural alienation from God is one of the commonest in the Old Testament (*e.g.* Num. xxvii. 17; 1 Kings xxii. 17; Ps. cxix. 176; Ezek. xxxiv. 5, 11). So in the New Testament (Matt. xviii. 12, 13; Luke xv. 4, etc.); although it is used also as a figure of docility, etc. (John x. 4, 5, etc.).—**But ye turned yourselves now.** On the ground of such instances as Matt. ix. 22, x. 13, Mark v. 30, viii. 33, John xii. 40, xxi. 20, it seems necessary to give the verb the middle sense here, although it might seem more in harmony with the context to render it 'are returned,' so as to bring out more clearly what had been done *for* them. It is in the past, too, as referring to the definite act of turning, once accomplished. He to whom they turned is Christ (not *God* here), who is designated both the Shepherd of their souls and the Overseer of their souls. The title 'Shepherd,' indeed, is used of God in the Old Testament (Ps. xxiii. 1; Isa. xl. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12, 16). But it is also applied to Messiah there (Ezek. xxxiv. 24), while in the New Testament it is not only claimed for Himself by Christ (John x. 11), but is given to Him again by Peter (v. 4). The use of the title 'Bishop,' or, as it simply means 'Overseer' or 'Guardian,' may be due to the fact that, like 'Shepherd,' it was a name given to the 'presidents of the churches, who were, so to speak, the representatives of the One Shepherd and Bishop, the Head of the whole Church' (Huther), or, as others suggest, it may have risen from such Old Testament usages as the ascription to the Lord

God (in Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12) of the action of 'seeking out' the sheep; which action is expressed by the verb cognate to the title. The two designations are closely akin. The early Greeks spoke of their princes as *shepherds* of the people, transferring the name not from the pastoral function of feeding the flock, but rather from that of tending, protecting, and directing it. In the New Testament, too, the 'pastors' in Paul's enumeration of functionaries in the Church (Eph. iv. 11) are 'shepherds,' and the cognate verb which our A. V. renders 'feed' in such passages as John xxi. 16, Acts xx. 28, 1 Pet. v. 2, has the wider sense of 'shepherding' or 'tending.'

CHAPTER III. 1–7.

The Law of Christian Order in the Household, as applied to the Relation of Marriage.

1 LIKEWISE,[1] ye wives, *be* in [a] subjection[2] to your own husbands; that, if any [b] obey not the word,[3] they also
may [c] without the word be [d] won[4] by the [e] conversation[5] of the
2 wives; while they [f] behold[6] your [g] chaste conversation[5] *coupled*
3 with fear; whose adorning, let it not be that[7] [h] outward *adorning* of [i] plaiting the [k] hair, and of wearing[8] of [l] gold,[9] or of
4 [m] putting on of apparel;[10] but *let it be* the [n] hidden [o] man of the [p] heart, in that which is [q] not corruptible,[11] *even the ornament* of a [r] meek and [s] quiet [t] spirit, which is in the [u] sight of
5 God of great price. For after this manner in the old time[12] the holy women also, who [v] trusted[13] in God, [w] adorned them-
6 selves, being in subjection[14] unto their own husbands: even[15] as Sarah [x] obeyed Abraham, calling him [y] Lord:[16] whose [z] daughters ye are[17] as long as[18] ye [a] do well, and are not
7 afraid with any [b] amazement.[19] Likewise,[20] ye husbands, dwell[21] with *them* according to [c] knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker [d] vessel,[22] and as being [e] heirs together[23] of the [f] grace of [g] life; that your prayers be not [h] hindered.

[a] See refs. at ch. ii. 13. Cf. ch. ii. 18.
[b] See refs. at ch. ii. 7.
[c] Ch. iv. 9; Mat. x. 29.
[d] Mat. xvi. 26, xviii. 15, xxv. 17, 20, 22; Mk. viii 36; Lu. ix. 25; Acts xxvii. 21; 1 Cor. ix. 19–22; Phil. iii. 8; Jas. iv. 13.
[e] See refs. at ch. i. 15.
[f] See refs. at ch. ii. 12.
[g] 2 Cor. xi. 2; Tit. ii. 5; Prov. xix. 3.
[h] 2 Cor. vii. 5; 2 Tim. iii. 7; Rev. xi. 2.
[i] Cf. Ex. xxxv. 22; Isa. iii. 18, 20.
[k] Mat. iii. 4, v. 36, x. 30; Rev. i. 14, etc.
[l] Acts iii. 6, xx. 33; 1 Tim. ii. 9.
[m] Cf. Job xii. 4.
[n] Rom ii. 29; 1 Cor. xiv. 25.
[o] Rom. vii. 22; 2 Cor. iv. 16; Eph. iii. 16.
[p] Ch. i 22; Rom. ii. 15, 29; 1 Cor. iv. 5, etc.
[q] See refs. at ch. i. 4.
[r] Mat. v. 5, xi 29, xxi 5; Zech. ix. 9; Ps. xxxvi. 11.
[s] Isa. lxvi. 2; 1 Tim. ii. 2.
[t] 1 Cor. iv. 21; Gal. vi. 1.
[u] Lu. xvi. 15; 1 Tim. ii. 3, v. 4, etc.
[v] Ps. cxliv. 15; Prov. i. 13; Isa. li. 5; Jo. v. 45; 2 Cor. i. 10. See also refs. at ch. i. 13
[w] Ezek. xvi. 11; Mat xii. 44; 1 Tim. ii. 9; Rev. xxi. 2.
[x] Mat. viii. 27; Rom. vi. 12; Heb. v. 9, xi. 8.
[y] Gen. xviii. 12.
[z] Gal. iv. 31.
[a] See refs. at ch. ii. 15.
[b] Prov. iii. 25.
[c] 2 Pet. i. 5, 6.
[d] Rom. ix. 21; 1 Thes. iv. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 21.
[e] Rom. viii. 17; Eph. iii 6; Heb. xi. 9.
[f] See refs. at ch. i. 13.
[g] Phil. ii. 16; Jas. i. 12.
[h] Acts xxiv. 4; Rom. xv. 22; Gal. v. 7; 1 Thes. ii. 18.

[1] *or, with R. V.*, In like manner
[2] *literally*, submitting yourselves
[3] *or*, even if any are disobedient to the word
[4] *literally*, shall without the word be won
[5] behaviour, *or*, manner of life
[6] *literally*, having beheld
[7] the
[8] *literally*, putting round
[9] golden ornaments, *or, as R. V. puts it*, jewels of gold
[10] dresses
[11] *literally*, in the incorruptibility; in the incorruptible *adorning*, *or, as R. V. prefers*, in the incorruptible *apparel*.
[12] aforetime, *according to R. V.*
[13] *or*, hoped
[14] submitting themselves
[15] *omit* even
[16] lord
[17] *literally*, whose children ye became
[18] *or*, if
[19] *or*, do not fear any terror
[20] *or*, Ye husbands in like manner
[21] *literally*, dwelling
[22] *or, with R. V. in margin*, unto the female vessel, as weaker
[23] *or, with R. V.*, as being also joint-heirs

When Paul defines the duties of bond-servants, he balances his statement by a corresponding exposition of the duties of masters (Eph. vi. 9; Col. iv. 1). Peter, dealing here specially with the application of the general Christian law of order and *submission*, passes at once to the position

of the wife as one of subordination in the household. We are not to infer from this difference between Peter's mode of handling the relative duties and Paul's, that there were few Christian husbands in the territories addressed by the former. Peter's counsels, while applying to wives generally, seem to be particularly directed to those married to heathen husbands. In 1 Cor. vii. 13-15, Paul states the general principle that a believing wife was not to leave an unbelieving husband, although, if the bond was broken by the husband, she might 'let him depart,' and need not refuse the separation. Peter here sets forth the wife's duty under the larger aspect of such a meek adjustment of herself to her position as might form the best persuasive with the husband. There was much to provoke the Christian wife to throw off the heathen husband's yoke. To the Greek the wife was something more than the slave, but much less than the husband's helpmeet—his dependant. In the social system of Rome, as it originally stood, the husband's power over the wife was, like the father's power over the child, unlimited, irresponsible, checked by no legal restrictions, and so inherent that neither age nor free act nor insanity could dissolve it. 'In a legal point of view, the family was absolutely guided and governed by the single, all-powerful will of the "father of the household" (*paterfamilias*). In relation to him all in the household were destitute of legal rights—the wife and the child no less than the bullock or the slave' (Mommsen's *History of Rome*, Book i. chap. v.). At least two centuries before the Christian era the Roman wife had begun to scheme for her emancipation, and a quarrel of the sexes set in which produced bitter fruit in the days of the Empire. 'The latter centuries of the Roman commonwealth,' says Dean Merivale, 'are filled with the domestic struggles occasioned by the obstinacy with which political restrictions were maintained upon the most sensitive of the social relations' (*The Romans under the Empire*, iv. p. 84). Among such outlying populations, too, as are now addressed by Peter, the wife's lot might contain elements of bitterness peculiarly apt to provoke her, when the Christian doctrines of equality and purity took possession of her mind, to rebel against her position of abject subserviency, against the harshness of the heathen husband's rule, against much in the relation itself which heathenism allowed, but Christian feeling revolted against. In view of the social disaster and the danger to the Christian name which repudiation of the ties of family life would entail, Peter enjoins on wives patient regard to the duties of their station, and submission for Christ's sake to its inconveniences.

Ver. 1. **In like manner, ye wives, submit yourselves.** Literally, it is 'submitting yourselves,' this conjugal duty being represented as on the same plane with the former, and simply another application of the general law stated in ii. 18.—**to your own husbands.** Here, as also in at least two other passages where the same charge is given, viz. Eph. v. 22, Tit. ii. 5 (in Eph. v. 24, and Col. iii. 18, the reading of the Received Text is insufficiently supported), the strong pronominal adjective which usually means 'own' or 'proper' is inserted before 'husbands.' There is, however, no such contrast intended, as some interpreters (Steiger, etc.) imagine, between those to whom these women were united in marriage and others. The fact that in the decadence of the language the adjective lost much of its original force, makes it doubtful how much emphasis can be allowed it here. It may point, however, to the nature of the marriage relation, the legal claims, the peculiar and exclusive union which it involved, as furnishing a reason for submission (see Ellicott on Eph. v. 22).—**in order that even if any are disobedient to the word.** By the *word* is meant, as at ii. 8, the sum of Revelation, or the Gospel. The verb rendered 'are disobedient' denotes, as at ii. 7, 8, the disposition that stands out positively against the truth. The case supposed is expressed as an exceptional and trying one.—**they shall without word be gained by the behaviour of the wives.** It would be natural to take the 'word' to mean here exactly what it meant in the prior clause, namely, the *Gospel*. In that case, however, we should have to put upon the term 'gained' the restricted sense (adopted by Schott) of won over to conjugal affection, to adherence to the wedded relation; whereas what Peter seems to have in view is the possibility of Christian wives winning over their heathen husbands to the Christian faith, and that under unfavourable circumstances. As it would be strange indeed (in view of Rom. x. 14-17) to find an apostle contemplating the possibility of a conversion to Christ without the instrumentality of the Gospel, it is necessary to suppose that there is a kind of play upon the words here, the same term being used (by a figure of speech known to grammarians as *antanaclasis*) with different meanings. So Bengel briefly explains the term *word* as meaning 'in the first instance the Gospel, in the second, talk.' The Syriac Version here renders it 'without trouble.' Wycliffe rightly gives 'without word.' Tyndale, Cranmer, the Genevan, and the Rhemish all have 'without the word.' Notice, also, how the old English sense of 'conversation' (as = conduct) appears in the A. V. here, and how the verb which our old English versions agree in translating 'won' here is the one which is used by our Lord in Matt. xviii. 15 ('thou hast gained thy brother'), and by Paul in 1 Cor. ix. 19, 20, 21 ('that I might gain the more,' etc.). Leighton speaks of a soul thus *gained* to Jesus Christ as 'added to His treasury, who thought not His own precious blood too dear to lay out for this gain.' The idea, therefore, is that, even in those most unpromising cases where the heathen husband steeled himself against the power of God's own Word, the Christian wife might haply win him over to Christianity by the silent persuasion of a blameless life, without word of hers. Where the preached Word failed, the voiceless eloquence of pure and consistent wifely behaviour might prevail, without labour of spoken argument or appeal. And the possibility of such victories of patience should encourage the wife to a wifely submission which might be hard to natural inclination. Compare Shakespeare's

> 'The silence often of pure innocence
> Persuades, when speaking fails.'
> —*Winter's Tale*, ii. 2.

Ver. 2. **having beheld your chaste behaviour coupled with fear.** On the force of the 'beheld,' as implying close observation, see on ii. 12, where the same term occurs. The behaviour is styled *chaste*, not in the limited sense of the English adjective, but as covering purity, modesty, and

whatever makes wifely conduct not only correct but winsome. It is further defined by a couple of words which mean literally 'in fear,' but are happily paraphrased by our A. V., 'coupled with fear,' after Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan. What is meant is not exactly 'the fear of God,' but rather a sensitive respect for the husband and the married relation. The chastity or purity of behaviour is exhibited as associated necessarily with the dutiful spirit that recoils from everything inconsistent with the woman's and the wife's position. Nothing could better express what is meant by this 'fear,' therefore, than Leighton's well-known description of it as 'a delicate and timorous grace, afraid of the least air or shadow of anything that hath but a resemblance of wronging it, in courage, or speech, or apparel.'

Ver. 3. **whose adorning let it be not the outward adorning of plaiting of the hair and of wearing of ornaments of gold, or of putting on of apparel.** The sentence opens with the relative 'whose' without any noun. It admits, therefore, of being construed in more than one way. The 'whose' may be taken in the possessive sense, and so = whose be not the outward adorning, etc.; or = whose distinction let it be not, etc.; or = whose business let it be not, etc. (Huther, etc.). Or the relative may have supplied to it the subsequent noun, and so = whose adorning let it be not, etc. (so both A. V. and R. V. with Wiesinger, Schott, Hofmann, etc.). As the 'adorning' means properly not the *act* of adorning but the *adornment* or ornament itself, the latter construction is preferable. The statement, then, is that the adornment which wives are to value is not that which is effected by the particular acts of plaiting or braiding the hair, wearing of gold (*i.e.*, as the form of the noun implies, *pieces* or *ornaments* of gold; see on i. 7, 18), putting on of apparel (literally, *dresses*). The terms expressing these acts, 'plaiting,' 'wearing' (literally, *putting round one*), and 'putting on,' occur nowhere else in the New Testament. They denote two distinct kinds of female adornment, namely, what the person itself presents, and what is put upon it. Hence we have first the plaiting of the natural ornament of the hair, and then other two modes which are given as branches (so the 'or' indicates) of one species of artificial ornamentation. The arts themselves had gone to unheard-of excess, as we learn from literature, coins, and sculpture, among the heathen ladies of the Empire. Pliny the elder speaks of having seen Nero's mother dressed in a robe of gold tissue, and Lollia Paulina in apparel covered with pearls and emeralds costing fifty millions of sesterces, which would be something like £432,000 (*Hist. Nat.* xxxiii. 19, ix. 35, 36). From other writers, such as Ovid (*de Art. Am.* iii. 136), Juvenal (*Satir.* vi. 502), and Suetonius (*Claud.* 40), we learn what extravagance of time, pains, and expense was lavished upon the dressing of the hair, how great ladies had slaves carefully instructed for that one service and specially assigned to it, how by rows of false curls, curious braidings, and strings of jewels, the hair was built up high above the head. (See Smith's *Dict. of Antiq.* under *Coma*, and Farrar's *Early Years of Christianity*, i. p. 5.) How much reason Peter had to dread the infection of Christian women with the same disease of luxury, we may gather from what appears later in the writings of such leaders of the Church as Cyprian, Jerome, and Clement of Alexandria. The last named, in his *Pædagogue* or *Instructor*, devotes much space to the detailed discussion of what is permissible and the censure of what is wrong in regard to dress, ear-rings, finger-rings, the binding of the hair, etc. It may be inferred, perhaps, from Peter's statement (and the inference is borne out by what we know from other sources) not only that many of the first Christian converts were women, but that not a few were women of means and position. He does not, however, speak of ornaments and tasteful attire as things unfit for a Christian woman, but condemns excess of attention to such things as if they made the wife's real attractions. In this, as in other things, the Gospel is a law of liberty, which declines to be bound to one rigid line of application in all circumstances. Compare the important parallel in 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10.

Ver. 4. **but the hidden man of the heart.** This phrase is taken by some to be practically equivalent to what is elsewhere called the 'new man' (Col. iii. 10), or the 'new creature' (2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15), *i.e.* the regenerate life itself on its inward side, the new nature that is formed by the Spirit of God 'in the secret workshop of the heart,' 'the new way of thinking, willing, and feeling' (Fronmüller, so also Alford, Wiesinger, Beza, etc.). It is analogous, however, rather to the other Pauline expressions, the 'inner man' (Eph. iii. 16), or the 'inward man' (Rom. vii. 22; 2 Cor. iv. 16). Of itself it denotes not the regenerate life specifically, but simply the inner life, the true self within, the contrast here being between those external accessories of ornamentation on which it is vain to depend for power of attraction or persuasion, and those inner qualities of character which are the secret of all permanent, personal influence (so substantially Calvin, Bengel, Huther, Hofmann, Schott, Weiss, etc.). The term 'man' is used much as we use the *I*, the *self*, the *personality*. It is described as 'hidden,' in antithesis to those exterior, material adornments which are meant to catch the eye. And it is defined as 'of the heart,' as found in the heart, or identified with it. Clement, in the treatise already referred to (*Pæd.* iii. 1), defines the 'inner man' as the 'rational nature which rules the outer man.'—**in the imperishableness of the meek and quiet spirit.** The inner personality of moral beauty which makes the wife's true adorning, which belongs to the heart and cannot be seen by the outer eye, is further defined in respect of what it consists in. That is, as the phrase literally runs, 'in *the imperishable* of the meek and quiet spirit;' the adjective meaning not 'without stain,' or 'uncorrupted,' as Grotius, Luther, Erasmus, take it, but in accordance with i. 7, simply 'permanent' in opposition to the transitory and decaying. This is construed, therefore, in several ways; either as = in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit (so A. V., but with a certain strain upon the Greek); or = in the incorruptible *apparel* of a meek and quiet spirit (so R. V., with Hofmann, Alford, etc.); or = in the *imperishableness* of a meek and quiet spirit,—*i.e.* in what cannot perish, namely, a meek and quiet spirit. This last is most in harmony with the previous contrast (in i. 7) between proved faith which is to be found unto praise at Christ's

coming, and gold that perisheth. So the Rhemish gives 'in the incorruptibility of a quiet and a modest spirit.' The other old English Versions are in confusion, *e.g.* Wycliffe's 'in incorruption and of mild spirit,' Tyndale's 'incorrupt with a meek and a quiet spirit' (so also the Genevan), and Cranmer's 'without all corruption, so that the spirit be at rest and quiet.' The quality of *meekness* implies more than gentleness. In the old Greek ethics it amounts only to *mildness*, in the sense of the opposite of roughness and violence (Plato, *Rep.* 558A, etc.), or in that of the subsidence of anger (Herod. ii. 18). It is defined by Aristotle as the mean between passionate temper and the neutral disposition which is incapable of heated feeling, and as inclining to the weakness of the latter (*Nic. Eth.* iv. 5). In the New Testament it is not mere equanimity, but the grace of a positive denial of self which holds disputings alien to it, and curbs the tendency of nature to passion, resistance, and resentment (cf. also Matt. v. 5, xxi. 5, and, above all, Christ's application of it to Himself, xi. 29). The quality of *quietness* expresses a tranquillity or peaceableness (the adjective is the same as the 'peaceable' of 1 Tim. ii. 2, its only other New Testament occurrence) which has its deep source within. Together, therefore, the two epithets may describe the beauty of the spirit which, as Bengel suggests, at once shrinks from giving trouble by the assertion of one's rights, and bears in calmness the grievances which come from others.—**which is in the sight of God of great price.** The estimate which is put upon such a spirit by Him who has said of Himself that He 'seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart' (1 Sam. xvi. 7), should be a further recommendation of it to these women. The same epithet is used to describe the array as *costly* (1 Tim. ii. 9), and the spikenard as *very precious* (Mark xiv. 3). It is another, with a similar sense, which occurs in i. 7, and is used to describe the pearl (Matt. xiii. 46) as one 'of great price,' and Mary's spikenard as 'very costly' (John xii. 3; cf. Matt. xxvi. 7). With Peter's statement of the wife's true adorning, compare above all the picture of the virtuous woman in Prov. xxxi. (specially ver. 25); and such classical parallels as this from Plutarch's *Nuptial Precepts*—'that adorns a woman which makes her more becoming; and this is not done either by gold, or emerald, or purple, but by those things which give her the appearance of dignity, orderliness, modesty.'

Ver. 5. **For thus in old time also did the holy women who hoped in God adorn themselves, submitting themselves to their own husbands.** The example of the women whose lives are recorded in the ancient history of God's people furnishes another incentive to the cultivation of the kind of attraction just explained. They were accustomed to seek in the beauty of wifely character their best adornment, and one chief evidence of their being women of this spirit was the respect and subordination which they exhibited in relation to their husbands. These women are called 'holy' here (as the *prophets* are also designated, 2 Pet. i. 21; Luke i. 70; Acts iii. 21; Eph. iii. 5) not merely in regard to their personal character, but in a semi-official sense as 'women of blessed memory' (Frommüller), occupying a distinct position among the people whom God had separated for Himself. The personal character is then more definitely described when it is added that 'they hoped *in* (or, literally, *toward*) God.' Their eye turned Godward, not earthward; their life drew its inspiration not from the present, but from the future; their expectation looked to the performance of God's promises, not to what things as they were could yield. Hence those material adornments which had such transient worth as they did possess only in men's sight, not in God's, were not to them what the contagion of custom and fashion threatened to make them to the godly women of Peter's own time.

Ver. 6. **as Sarah obeyed Abraham.** Why is Sarah introduced in this connection? Possibly as the *standard* by which the holy women of old measured their wifely submission. Taking 'as' in the sense of 'according as' (with Schott), we should have in this sentence a new stroke added to the preceding description; and the point would be, that not only did these holy women of olden time submit themselves to their own husbands, but they regulated the measure of their wifely obedience by no lower standard than the noble example of Sarah. Most interpreters (Huther, Alford, Bengel, Schott, etc.) retain for the 'as' the sense of 'as for instance,' and take Sarah to be introduced here simply as an eminent example of what characterized the holy women of the sacred history generally. It is plain, however, that she is named here not merely as one instance out of many, however brilliant an instance, but as the ancestress of the Israel of God. As Abraham is the father of all the faithful, so Sarah is the mother of all believing women, and the fact that their common mother made herself so obedient to her own husband is argument enough with her daughters in the kingdom of God now, as it was with her daughters in the kingdom of God then. The completeness and constancy of Sarah's obedience are implied whether we read the 'obeyed' as an imperfect or as the historical past; for the authorities differ. The latter reading (see similar instances in John xvii. 4; Gal. iv. 8) indeed gives even greater force to the idea of completeness, designating the whole course of Sarah's wifely conduct by the quality which belonged to it as a finished whole.—**calling him lord.** The terms in which she spoke of Abraham in relation to herself are instanced as the natural expression of the spirit of meek subordination which animated her. One important historical occasion on which she recognised him as her *lord* (the same title is given by Hannah to Elkanah in the Septuagint Version of 1 Sam. i. 8) is recorded in Gen. xviii. 12. It has been observed that in the Old Testament Sarah is 'the mother even more than the wife,' the picture of a motherly affection, full of tenderness to her own child, and of a zealous regard for his interest, which made her cruel to others. It is not less true, however, that she is emphatically the wife, sinking her own independence in her husband. The only occasions on which she asserts that independence are the two expulsions of Hagar. In the New Testament she appears but seldom, once as an example of faith (Heb. xi. 11), twice where she is entirely secondary to Abraham (Rom. v. 19, ix. 9), and here in the character which Tennyson depicts in his *Isabel:*

'A courage to endure and to obey—
A hate of gossip, parlance, and of sway,
Crowned Isabel, through all her placid life,
The queen of marriage,—a most perfect wife.'

—whose children ye became. The statement is not that these women *are* (as the R. V., the Vulgate, etc., render it) Sarah's children, far less that they *shall be* such, as some paraphrase it, but that they *became* or *were made* such. The phrase points not to a change from being Sarah's children after the flesh to being her children after the spirit, but rather to a change which made those who were in no sense descendants of Sarah children of hers in the truest sense. It applies quite naturally to Gentile readers, Gentile women now christianized being styled children of Sarah, just as Gentile believers generally are called children of Abraham (Gal. iii. 7, etc.).—**doing well.** Does this qualify the 'ye' in the previous 'ye became,' and so express either a *condition* or an *evidence* of the spiritual kinship in which the women whom Peter addresses stood to Sarah? Or does it qualify the 'holy women' of old, and so express certain characteristics of their wifely example? The difficulty of establishing a very clear connection between these participles and the past verb 'ye became,' has induced some to prefer the former view, and to treat the first part of ver. 6 as a parenthesis. Thus, according to Bengel (Westcott and Hort appear also to recognise it as possible), the construction would run—'obeying their own husbands (as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose children ye became), doing good, and not fearing,' etc. The latter connection, however, approves itself as the more natural to the vast majority of interpreters. There remains, at the same time, much division of opinion as to the precise effect to which this participle and the following qualify the Christian women whom Peter has in view. Some take them to express the requirement on which their spiritual relation to Sarah is suspended. So the A. V. renders 'as long as ye do well,' the R. V. 'if ye do well,' and Beza, Alford, and many others agree with this. Others (Harless, Wiesinger, etc.) think they denote rather the *sign* of the spiritual kinship, as if = whose children ye became, as is proved by the fact that ye do well, etc. Others (Hofmann, etc.) regard them as expressing the way in which the kinship was established, as if = whose children ye became, and that just as (or, in such wise that) ye did good. There is the further question as to what is specially referred to in the clause. The 'doing well' does not refer here to a life of beneficence, but either to the good act of turning to Christ, the act of conversion (for which very definite sense appeal is made to the use of the verb in ii. 20), or, as is most probable, to the good doing exhibited in the loyal discharge of all wifely duty, —the good which Milton thus commends:

'Nothing lovelier can be found
In woman, than to study household good,
And good works in her husband to promote.'
—*Paradise Lost*, Ix. 232.

—and not fearing any terror (or, *scare*). The noun used here for fear is one which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, although the cognate verb is found twice, with the sense of *terrify* according to our A. V. (Luke xxi. 9, xxiv. 37). It means any passionate emotion, any scare or nervous excitement, and may have either a subjective sense or an objective. The former is favoured by Luther, our own A. V., etc. The latter, however, is undoubtedly the sense here, as is shown both by the grammar of the clause and by the fact that Prov. iii. 25 (where the objective use is evident) appears to be in Peter's mind. So the older English Versions take it, *e.g.* Wycliffe gives 'not dreading any perturbation;' Tyndale, 'not afraid of every shadow;' Cranmer, 'not afraid for any terror;' the Genevan, 'not being afraid of any terror;' the Rhemish, 'not fearing any perturbation.' The idea expressed by the clause, therefore, is not merely that they were to do all this *willingly*, and not out of fear (Hottinger, etc.); nor that in doing all this they were yet not to allow their submission to carry them the length of being afraid to act on the principle of obeying God rather than man, when driven to a choice between the two; but that they were to do good, specially in the realm of wifely duty, in spite of what they might have to fear from hostile surroundings and heathen husbands. In this superiority to the weakness of timidity, in this courageous adherence to all that is dutiful, even under distressing circumstances, they were also to show themselves true daughters of their great ancestress in the kingdom of faith.

Ver. 7. **Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives.** The brief counsels to husbands which are now appended to the ample exposition of the duties of wives are neither a mere parenthesis in the Epistle (Canon Cook), nor simply a corollary to the foregoing exhortation (Canon Mason). Far less can they be said to be out of place, as not in harmony with the general idea of subjection (so Weiss). Both the formula 'in like manner' and the participial turn of the sentence (literally = *dwelling together*) show that what is now said is given still as an integral portion of the general injunction of ii. 13, and that it deals with another type of submission. There is a submission which husbands, notwithstanding that the man is the head of the woman, have to yield, not less than wives, to the idea and object of the married state as one form of the 'every ordinance of man.' This implies on the side of the husbands that they are to *dwell with* their wives. Should a Christian husband be wedded to a heathen wife, he is not to consider himself freed on that account from the claims of family and conjugal life. Their association in the home life is to be **according to knowledge.** This does not mean according to their knowledge *of the Gospel* (Grotius, etc.); neither is it exactly = according to the Christian recognition of the wife's relation to the husband (Schott, etc.). It means *reasonably, intelligently, i.e.* with a just recognition and wise consideration of what the ordinance itself is, and what the relative positions of husband and wife are. 'One cannot now prescribe rules,' says Luther; 'God brings it home to every man himself that he must act toward his wife agreeably to reason, according as may be best adapted to each wife' (see also Steiger). So the poet Thomson describes the husband,

'Who, with superior dignity, with reason,
And manly tenderness, will ever love her;
Not first a kneeling slave, and then a tyrant.'

—giving honour to the woman as the weaker vessel, as also heirs together of the grace of life. 'The whole of chivalry is in these words,'

says Canon Mason. The construction of the passage, however, is somewhat uncertain. The word rendered 'the woman' is properly speaking an adjective, 'the female' qualifying the noun 'vessel.' The 'dwell with' may have its object either in the term 'your wives,' which then must be supplied from the context, or it may be connected immediately with the noun 'vessel.' The phrase 'giving honour' also may go either with the 'woman,' etc., or with the 'heirs together.' Hence the whole sentence may be rendered as above, which is the construction adopted (with some minor differences) by the A. V., the R. V., the old English Versions, etc. Or it may run thus —'dwell according to knowledge with the female vessel as the weaker vessel, giving honour to them as heirs together,' etc. In either case it is shown that if the home life is to be regulated so as to be 'according to knowledge,' there must be a considerate recognition of the natural weakness of the woman, and a readiness to give her (the verb means to apportion or assign; this is its only occurrence in the New Testament) the honourable regard which is due to her as the husband's associate in life and in grace. The term *vessel* is used here in the figurative sense, in which it is elsewhere applied to men as objects made by God, and used as the instruments of His purpose (cf. Acts ix. 15; Rom. ix. 21, 22, 23; 2 Tim. ii. 21; cf. also 2 Cor. iv. 7). This usage has its basis in the language of the Old Testament prophets, *e.g.* Jer. xviii. 6, xix. 11, xxii. 28, xlviii. 36; Isa. xxix. 16, xlv. 9, lxiv. 8; Hos. viii. 8; Ps. ii. 9; cf. Rev. ii. 27. It is used in the solemn sense of vessels of God's *wrath* or *mercy*, and vessels *chosen* for His service; but also, as here and in 1 Thess. iv. 4 (in which last it seems to designate the wife), in reference to the Divine intention in the natural relations. Husband and wife, too, are both regarded here as equally the vessels or instruments by which God's purpose is made good in this particular province of life, the only difference between them being that the one is the weaker vessel, and the other the stronger. This natural difference establishes the wife's claim on the considerate regard of the husband. The same claim upon his respect and honour is made yet stronger by the fact that all natural differences disappear in the spiritual relation which makes them joint-heirs (cf. Rom. viii. 17; Eph. iii. 6; Heb. xi. 9) of the grace of life. The exact force of this latter statement will vary slightly according to the choice which is made between two somewhat equally balanced readings, one of which puts the 'heirs together' in apposition to the 'husbands,' the other in apposition to the wives. In the former case, the point is that the husband's *consciousness* of being on the same platform with the wife in the inheritance of grace should enlist his honour and regard for her; in the other, it will be that honour is due to the wife not only because she is the wife, and naturally weaker than the husband, but also because she has all the dignity of having in point of fact an equal interest in grace. What they inherit together is called 'the grace of life;' by which is to be understood neither the 'gift or dower of natural life' which is committed to husband and wife (Canon Mason), nor the life of Divine favour and blessing which the married estate is designed to be (Hofmann). As the immediate mention of prayer suggests, it means rather the grace which consists in eternal life, or which brings that life to us; or, as Alford and others take it, 'the gracious gift of eternal life'—that new life as a whole, of which the woman is participant equally with the man. It is not necessary to suppose that only Christian wives are in view. The clause deals simply with the fact that God makes no distinction between husband and wife in regard to this gift of a life which is at once a glorious present possession and an object of elevating anticipation. The idea is not merely that 'the hope of eternal glory makes men generous and mild,' as Bengel interprets it, but that the recognition of another as having the same place as ourselves in God's offer of grace, above all if that other has the sacred name of wife, should teach us to yield the honour which has been enjoined.

—to the end that your prayers be not hindered. The reading varies here between two forms of the verb, one which means to be *cut off*, *i.e.* in the sense of being destroyed, or in that of being debarred from communication with the throne of grace; and another (and this is the better attested) which means to be *impeded* or obstructed. The prayers are taken by many interpreters (Calvin, Alford, Weiss, etc.) to be the conjugal prayers of husband and wife, social prayers, or family prayers; in which case the idea is that, where the wife is not recognised by the husband for what she is in God's sight, the two cannot pray in concert as married people. There will be nothing to call forth their common prayers, and the blessing attached (Matt. xviii. 19) to united supplication cannot visit their home. As the husbands, however, are directly dealt with in the verse, it is better to take the prayers to be their prayers; and the idea will be that the Christian husband's own prayers will be arrested on their way to the throne. The injustice done to the wife will burden their pinions, and check their rise to the Divine Ear. The possibility of so disastrous a result is another reason for giving honour to the wife.

CHAPTER III. 8–16.

General Counsels bearing on the Duties of all Christians one toward another, and on their Attitude to their Adversaries.

8 FINALLY, *be ye* all of one mind,[1] having compassion one of another,[2] love as brethren,[3] *be* [a] pitiful,[4] *be* [b] courte-
9 ous:[5] not rendering [c] evil for evil, or [d] railing[6] for railing:[6] but [e] contrariwise [f] blessing; knowing that ye are[7] [g] thereunto[8]
10 called, that ye should [h] inherit a [i] blessing.[9] [k] For he that [l] will[10] [m] love [n] life, and [o] see good [p] days, let him [q] refrain his tongue from evil, and his [r] lips that they speak no [s] guile:
11 let[11] him [t] eschew[12] evil, and do good; let him [u] seek peace,
12 and [v] ensue[13] it. For[14] the [w] eyes of the Lord *are* over[15] the righteous, and his [x] ears *are open* unto their [y] prayers:[16] but the
13 face of the Lord *is* against[17] them that [z] do evil. And who *is* he that will [a] harm you, if ye be [b] followers[18] of that which is
14 good? But and if[19] ye suffer[20] for [c] righteousness' sake, [d] happy[21] *are ye:* and be not [e] afraid of their [f] terror,[22] neither
15 be [g] troubled; but [h] sanctify the [i] Lord God[23] in [k] your hearts: and[24] *be* [l] ready always to *give* an [m] answer[25] to every man that asketh you a [n] reason of the hope that is in you[26] with [o] meek-
16 ness and fear;[27] having [p] a good conscience; that, [q] whereas they speak evil of you,[28] as of evil-doers,[29] they may [r] be ashamed that falsely [s] accuse[30] your good [t] conversation[31] in Christ.

[a] Eph. iv. 32. [b] Prov. xxiii. 23. [c] Rom. xii. 17; 1 Thes. v. 15. [d] 1 Tim. v. 14; Prov. x. 18. Cf. also 1 Pet. ii. 23. [e] 2 Cor. ii. 7; Gal. ii. 7. [f] Lu. vi. 28; Rom. xii. 14; 1 Cor. iv. 12; Jas. iii. 9, etc. [g] See refs. on ch. ii. 9. [h] Isa. lxv. 9; Mat. xxv. 34; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, xv. 50; Heb. i. 4, 14, vi. 12, xii. 17. [i] Gen. xlix. 25; Heb. vi. 8, xii 17. [k] Ps. xxxiii. 12–16. [l] Gal. iv. 22, vi. 12; 1 Tim. i. 7; 2 Tim. iii. 13; Jas. ii. 20. [m] Ps. xxxix. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 8. [n] 1 Cor. xv. 19; Phil. i. 20; Jas. iv. 14. [o] Lu. ii. 26, xvii. 22; Jo. iii. 3; Heb. xi. 5.

[p] Eccles. xii. 1. [q] Ch. iv. 1; Ps. xxxvi. 8; also Heb. x. 2; Lu. v. 4; Acts v. 42. vi. 13; Eph. i. 16. [r] Hos. xiv. 3; Heb. xiii. 15; also Mat. xv. 8; Rom. iii. 13; 1 Cor. xiv. 21; Isa. xxix. 13. [s] See refs at ch. ii. 1, 22. [t] Rom. xvi. 17; Ps. xxxvi. 27. [u] Mat. vi. 33; Col. iii. 1. [v] Rom. ix. 30, 31, xiv. 19; 1 Cor. xiv. 1; Phil. iii. 12, 14; 2 Tim. ii. 23; Heb. xii. 14, etc. [w] Deut. xi. 12. [x] Jas. v. 4. [y] Lu. i. 13, ii 37, v. 33; Acts i. 14; Rom. x. 1; 2 Cor. i. 11, ix. 14; Phil. i. 4, 19, iv. 6; Eph. v. 18; 1 Tim. ii. 1, v. 5; 2 Tim. i. 3; Heb. v. 7; Jas. v. 16. [z] Jo. xviii. 30. [a] Gen. xv. 13; Ex. v. 22; Isa. l 9; Acts vii. 6, 19, xii. 1, xiv. 2, xviii. 10. [b] Acts xxi. 20; Tit. ii. 14. [c] Mat. v. 10, etc. [d] Mat. v. 3–11, xi 6, xiii. 16, xvi. 17; Lu. i. 45; Jo. xiii. 17, etc [e] Jonah i. 10; Isa. viii. 12, 13; Mk. iv. 41; Lu. ii. 9. [f] Isa. viii. 12; Esth. iii. 15; Mat. ii. 3, xiv. 26; Mk. vi. 50; Lu. i. 12, xxiv. 38; Jo. xi. 33, xii. 27, xiii. 21, xiv. 1, 27; Acts xv. 24, xvii. 8; Gal. i. 7, v. 10 [g] Ex. xx. 8; Isa. viii. 13, xxix. 23; Mat. vi. 9. [h] Col iii. 24. [i] See refs. at ver. 4 [k] Ch. i. 5; Mat. xxii. 4, 8, xxiv. 44, xxv. 10; Lu. xii. 40, xiv. 17, xxii. 23; Jo. vii. 6; Acts xxiii. 15, 21; 2 Cor. ix. 5, x. 6, 16; Tit. iii. 1. [l] Acts xxii. 1, xxv. 16; 1 Cor. ix. 3; 2 Cor. vii. 11; Phil. i. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 16. [m] Ch. iv. 5; Mat. xii. 36; Lu. xvi. 2; Acts xix. 40; Heb xiii. 17. [n] 1 Cor. iv 21; 2 Cor. x. 1; Gal. v. 23; Jas. i. 21, iii. 13. [o] Acts xxiii. 1; 1 Cor. viii. 7, x. 25; 2 Cor. i. 12, x. 2; 1 Tim. i. 5, 19; Heb. ix. 9, x. 22. [p] See refs. at ch ii. 12. Cf. also Job xix. 3; Jas. iv. 11. [q] See refs. at ch. ii. 7. [r] Lu. vi. 28; also Mat. v. 44 doubtfully. [s] See refs. at ch. ii. 15.

[1] *or, with R. V., in one word,* like-minded
[2] sympathizing, *or, with R. V.,* compassionate
[3] *literally,* brother-loving
[4] *or, with R. V., etc.,* tender-hearted
[5] *rather,* humble-minded
[6] *or,* reviling
[7] were
[8] hereunto, *or,* unto this
[9] *or,* inherit blessing
[10] desires to. *or,* purposes to
[11] *rather,* and let him, *or,* let him, moreover
[12] *or, with R. V.. etc.,* turn away from
[13] *i.e.* pursue
[14] Because
[15] upon
[16] *literally,* his ears unto their supplication
[17] *or,* upon
[18] *rather, as in R. V.,* zealous, *literally,* zealots
[19] But if even, *or,* Nay, if even
[20] *properly,* should suffer, *or,* were to suffer
[21] *or,* blessed
[22] *literally,* fear not their fear
[23] sanctify Christ as Lord
[24] *rather omit* and
[25] *literally,* for an answer
[26] *literally,* a reason concerning the hope, *or,* an account of the hope
[27] *read rather,* but (*or,* yet) with meekness and fear
[28] *rather,* in the matter in which ye are spoken against, *or, with R. V.,* wherein ye are spoken against
[29] *omit* as of evil-doers
[30] *rather,* traduce
[31] behaviour, *or,* manner of life

The injunctions on the subject of the blamelessness of conduct by which Christians should be distinguished in their political, civil, and domestic relations, are now succeeded by a train of exhortations of a wider kind. These are given in as rich detail as the former. They are addressed to all believers without distinction, and without special reference to the particular orders of life which are indicated by the terms subjects, slaves, wives, husbands. They are given, nevertheless, in connection with the same general inculcation of seemliness of conduct (chap. ii. 11, 12), of which those other counsels were applications; and they express, therefore, various broad and general elements in the kind of life by which gainsayers are to be silenced. Heathen eyes would be keen and jealous scrutineers of what Christians were, not only in their attitude to magistracies, their ideas on the rights of property, their mode of life within the sacred circle of the home, but also in the whole compass of their relations to each other and to the world outside. So we have here in the first place a bird's-eye view of what they ought to be among themselves, and then, in larger outline, a picture of what they ought to be in face of the hostility of surrounding heathenism. The former subject is briefly dealt with. The latter is unfolded at length, and is enforced by appeal both to general principles and to Christ's example.

Ver. 8. **Finally, be ye all**; or, to retain the immediate dependence which the previous counsels had upon the general exhortations of ii. 11, 12, or ii. 13, *finally being all*. It is, says an old Greek interpreter, as if the apostle had written, 'Why should I give particular directions? I say simply to all.'—**like-minded**. What Peter sets in the forefront of this summary of universal Christian duties is that oneness of judgment and inclination on which Paul so often touches (Rom. xii. 16, xv. 5; 1 Cor. i. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Phil. ii. 2, iii. 15; Eph. iv. 3). It is expressed by an adjective, which occurs nowhere else in the N. T. It denotes the agreement of those whose mind and will are set upon the same objects (Schott), or unity in sentiment, and, therefore, in faith (Steiger, Bengel). It is not to be limited to agreement in doctrinal opinion. It is the harmony of many minds which 'springs from the sense of a common origin, from common relations, and interests, and aims, and hopes' (Lillie).—**compassionate**, or, better, *sympathetic*. This is the solitary occurrence of the adjective in the N. T., although the cognate verb is found twice (Heb. iv. 15, x. 34). It denotes oneness in *feeling*, and covers Paul's 'rejoice with them that do rejoice,' as well as his 'weep with them that weep' (Rom. xii. 15). The unity of mind and the unity of feeling are associated again in Rom. xii. 15, 16, and Phil. ii. 1, 2.—**loving as brethren**, or, *loving the brethren*; another adjective found nowhere else in the N. T. See on i. 22, where the noun is used, as it is also in 2 Pet. i. 7; Rom. xii. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 1.—**compassionate**, or, as it is rendered in its only other N. T. occurrence (Eph. iv. 32), *tender-hearted*. In classical Greek the adjective and the cognate noun (the former being rare) have either a purely physical sense or denote stout-heartedness. They owe to Christianity their delicate ethical tone, and the sense of the kinship of man with man which softens and enriches them.—**humble-minded**. So we must read instead of the very poorly-attested term of the *Textus Receptus*, which our A. V. rather unhappily renders 'courteous,' as if it referred to manners, or external demeanour. Lowliness of mind in the classical Ethics ranked not as a virtue, but as a fault or infirmity,—that of meanness of spirit or faint-heartedness. The adjective which Peter uses (which occurs only here and in Prov. xxix. 23) has even in Plutarch's writings an unfavourable sense. The noun for 'humble-mindedness' occurs in no Greek writer prior to the Christian era. In Christianity it becomes a grace, contrasted with the heathen virtue of 'high-mindedness,' and born of the sense of unworthiness. It is the thinking ourselves little because we are little. So Bernard defines it as the virtue which teaches a man out of the truest knowledge of himself to esteem himself lightly. In the N. T. it denotes humility toward God (Acts xv. 19) and toward our fellow-men (v. 5; Phil. ii. 3). Primarily it is the former. Hence it is opposed both to the mock-humility of morbid feeling which has so often shown itself in the history of Christ's Church, and to 'slavish deference to men' (see specially Neander, *Planting of Christianity*, i. pp. 483–5, Bohn).—The connection between these precepts is variously understood. Some (*e.g.* Hofmann, Huther) take the first three to be notes of what Christians should be among themselves, and the others to be notes of what they should be towards all without distinction of Christian and non-Christian. Their relations are probably of a less external kind than that. The primary duty of like-mindedness or unity in sentiment naturally carries with it the unity of feeling which makes us enter into the joys and sorrows of others as if they were our own; and this oneness in mind and feeling, when it is exhibited toward our fellow-Christians, means nothing less than brotherly affection which takes a living interest in all that concerns others, expressing itself in all tenderness of regard for them, and inspiring us with that disposition to think others better than ourselves without which love remains less than it should be. There is a noticeable analogy between this train of precepts and the briefer series given by Paul in Col. iii. 12. In the one, as in the other, humility crowns the list. And justly so. For it is the safeguard of all the social graces, the virtue which makes all other virtues, lovely in themselves, proof against assault, and safe from exaggeration.

Ver. 9. **not rendering evil for evil**. The transition from the duties of Christians toward each other to their duties in relation to their adversaries is made easily through the last-named grace. An undue esteem of ourselves is inconsistent either with the oneness of mind and feeling which makes genuine brotherliness, or with the Christian law of overcoming evil with good. Humble-mindedness is 'essential both to true gentleness of love and to true patience under injuries' (Alford).—**or railing for railing**; rather, *reviling for reviling*, as in ii. 23; **but contrariwise blessing**, *i.e.* nay rather, on the contrary, *blessing them*; for the word is a participle, not a noun. Peter seems to have in mind here his Lord's words in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 44). It is not necessary, therefore, to go beyond what is meant there, or to assert for the term 'blessing' here the sense of expressing kindness in the form of deed as well as word. The 'blessing' denoted by this verb is usually con-

trasted with cursing or the like (Luke vi. 28; Rom. xii. 14; 1 Cor. iv. 12; Jas. iii. 9; as well as Matt. v. 44). The return which we are to render for injury done us, whether in the form of the evil deed or the reviling word, is to desire and pray for the good of the injurers.—**because hereunto were ye called.** On the ground of the best ancient authorities we must drop the 'knowing' which is inserted in the A. V., and read as above, with the Revised Version, only that 'because' represents the original more fairly than the 'for' of that Version. The man who once was quick enough to take the law of retaliation into his own hand, meeting deed of violence with deed of violence, and taunts and accusations with cursing and swearing, as in the case of the high priest's servant and that of the bystanders in the court (Matt. xxvi. 51, 73, 74), now preaches a revenge which consists not only in patient endurance of wrong, but in endeavouring to win God's favour for the wrong-doers. And this he does on the high ground that anything short of this is inconsistent with our Christian vocation itself. The duty which was formerly enjoined on slaves by an appeal to Christ's example (chap. ii. 23), is now repeated as a duty applicable to all Christians, and as involved in the Divine call which first makes us Christians. That call, too, is again expressed as a definite event of the past, carrying with it once for all, and from the very beginning of the Christian life, all that Peter would now pledge us to.—**in order that ye might inherit a blessing**; or better, simply, *inherit blessing*. How does this final clause stand related to the others? The point will be somewhat different according as we take the 'hereunto' to refer to what precedes it or to what follows it. Some suppose the 'hereunto' to refer to the 'contrariwise blessing them;' in which case the sense will be that, when they were called to be Christians, they were called also to the duty of blessing those who did them wrong, and they were called to this with the view of obtaining blessing for themselves. In favour of this construction (which is supported by such exegetes as Calvin, de Wette, Hofmann, etc.) we have the analogous use of 'hereunto' in chap. ii. 21. Others take it to refer to the contents of the final clause itself; in which case the idea is that Christians were called hereunto, namely, to an inheritance of blessing for themselves. In favour of this view (which is supported by Alford, Huther, Luther, Bengel, Schott, etc.) it is argued that it is more biblical, and more in harmony in particular with Paul's reasoning in Eph. iv. 32, to say that we ought to bless others *because* we ourselves have blessing, than to say that we are to bless others *in order* that we may ourselves get blessing. Peter's use of the formula 'hereunto,' and the consideration that the inheritance of blessing which is spoken of here is more naturally taken, as is the case with so many of Peter's phrases, to point mainly to the final, future inheritance of which the present is but a foretaste, give the advantage to the former construction. On either view we have an idea thoroughly pertinent to the subject. On the second the point of the exhortation is that the blessing of which Christians are heirs is one not of merit but only of God's grace, and this surely should make it natural for them to exhibit a corresponding attitude to those who deserve nothing at their hands, but on the contrary wrong them. On the first, the point is a still deeper one—namely, that it is God's purpose, indeed, that Christians should have good, but in order to *have* good, they must *be* good; hence He called them to *be* good (in this way, as well as others, of laying aside the evil impulses of nature) in order that the heritage which is designed for them might come to be theirs actually, and theirs as a heritage of blessing. This is in harmony, too, with the Old Testament conceptions of life and good which are next introduced.

Ver. 10. **For he that desires to love life and see good days.** The kind of behaviour which has been urged in vers. 8, 9 is now further recommended by considerations drawn from the dependence of happiness on character, and from God's regardfulness of men's lives, as these are expressed in Ps. xxxiv. 13–17. Whether that psalm is taken to deal (*e.g.* with Delitzsch and its inscription) with the crisis when David saved his life among the Philistines by acting the part of a madman, and had to take refuge in the cave of Adullam, or (with Hitzig, Hupfeld, Olshausen, etc.) is referred to other times, it records the testimony borne to the true secret of a secure and gladsome life by one who had learnt that secret in the school of adversity. It describes what makes the good of life according to the Old Testament standard. In taking up its words, Peter follows the Greek Version (which is a literal rather than an adequate rendering of the Hebrew), but introduces certain changes which, while in themselves true to the spirit of the original, adapt it better to his immediate object and to the higher standard of the New Testament. The opening words, which in the original are in the form of a question, are given as a direct statement. Instead of 'what man is he that desireth life and loveth many days,' according to our A. V., or, as the Greek Version renders it, 'who is the man who desires life, loving good days,' Peter puts it thus: 'he who desires to love life, and to see good days.' The transposition of the word 'love,' along with the adoption of the 'good' for the 'many,' gives a new turn to the statement, the effect of which is to make the prominent thing not the number of the days or the length of life, but the kind of life. The phrase 'love life' means more than 'to be fain to have life,' or 'to *show* love for life' (de Wette), or even 'to be in earnest as to the love of life' (Wiesinger). It is to be taken in the simple sense of loving life for its good as opposed to *hating* it for its emptiness and vexations (Lillie), in the slightly modified sense of *cherishing* life, or in the secondary sense (which the verb has also in the Classics) of being *pleased* with life. So Bengel makes it=he who wishes so to live as not to be weary of life. Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan (not Wycliffe and the Rhemish, however) go astray here, rendering it, 'if any man (or, he that doth) long after life and loveth to see good days.' The term 'see' has also the intensive force of *experiencing* or knowing personally what a thing is, which it often has in the Old Testament, *e.g.* Ps. xvi. 10, xxvii. 13, etc.—**let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.** Turning the second persons of the Hebrew and the Septuagint into third persons, Peter adopts the conditions on which the Psalmist suspends the boon of a life of such good and gladness. There is a climax in these conditions. They rise from the negative idea of making an

end of all *evil-speaking*, to the stronger but still negative idea of turning away from *evil-doing*, thence to the positive idea of *doing good*, and finally to the sedulous pursuit of *peace*. The sins of speech are comprehensively indicated by the two distinct terms *evil* (which need not be limited to mere terms of reproach or the like) and *guile*; on which latter see ii. 1, 22. 'He first notices what vices are to be guarded against, to wit, that we are not to be abusive and insolent, then that we are not to be fraudulent and double. And then he goes on to deeds' (Calvin). With this compare James on the bridling and taming of the tongue (i. 36, iii. 1–12).

Ver. 11. **And let him turn from evil and do good.** The best authorities introduce the connecting 'and,' or 'further,' which the A. V. omits. The 'eschew' of the A. V. (comp. Shakespeare's 'What cannot be *eschewed*, must be embraced,' *Mer. Wives*, v. 5, 251), connected with the old French *eschever*, German *scheuen*, English *shy*, means to *shun*, and sufficiently expresses the idea, which is that of turning away from something which comes in one's way. See specially Prov. iv. 15. To this avoidance of evil is added the duty of active goodness, as these two things are coupled elsewhere in the Psalms (xxxvii. 27), in the burden of prophetic exhortation (Isa. i. 16, 17), and in Paul (Rom. xii. 9).—**let him seek peace and pursue it.** This blamelessness and kindliness of life, at once in word and in deed, should take the still more definite form of a determination to secure *peace*. This indicates that the irreproachable goodness in view is still that of those who are under peculiar temptation to the opposite. Those who suffer from slander or other kinds of wrong are not to imagine themselves exempt from these great laws of Christian duty. All the more are they called to guard against every form of evil, to resist the inclination to take their case into their own hand. They are to meet evil by doing positive good, and cultivating all that makes for peace. This last is represented as something worth straining every effort for. It is to be *sought*, nay, it is to be *pursued*, with the expenditure of strenuous and unflagging endeavour which the hunter devotes to the chase. The old English 'ensue,' which the A. V. adopts only in this one instance (comp. Shakespeare's 'I know repentant tears *ensue* the deed,' *Lucrece*, 502), comes from the French *ensuivre*, and has now almost lost this transitive force. With the view of the good of life, which Psalmist and Apostle thus proceed upon in their ethical counsels, may be compared such parallels, although they are but partial, as this from Young—

'That life is long which answers life's great end;'

and Bailey's familiar lines—

'We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.'

Ver. 12. **Because the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication.** This blameless, patient, beneficent, and peaceable manner of life, which has been recommended as containing the secret of all gladness in one's life, and all goodness in one's days, is further urged on the ground of God's observant interest in our life. He keeps the righteous ever within the loving vision of His eye and gracious hearing of His ear. It cannot, therefore, but go well with them, however they be tried by slander or persecution. The word rendered 'prayers' in the A. V. is singular in the original, and is always given as a singular by the A. V. except in this one passage. It means also rather prayer for particular benefits than prayer in general.—**but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil.** Peter fails to add what the Psalmist appends here, 'to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.' The preposition, also, is the same here as in the former clause, and should be translated simply 'upon,' not 'against.' It is doubtful, too, whether any difference between the anthropomorphic terms 'eyes' and 'face' can be made good, such as is supposed, *e.g.*, by Schott, who takes the former to be a figure of favourable regard, and the latter of hostile. The different meaning which God's sleepless observance must have to the evil is left as self-understood, and obtains thereby an intenser force. It is enough for the righteous to know that God's eye is upon the evil, and the knowledge of this adds to their own sense of security in the midst of enemies.

Ver. 13. **And who is he that will do you evil, if ye be zealous of that which is good?** The counsels of vers. 8, 9 are yet again enforced by a still more pointed statement of the security of the righteous. This statement is attached to the immediately preceding thoughts, God's supervision of the evil as well as of the good being the guarantee that no real harm can be inflicted by the former on the latter. Its interrogative form adds also to its confidence. Compare not only the great succession of interrogatives in Rom. viii. 31–35, but such prophetic parallels as Isa. l. 9, which latter may perhaps be in Peter's mind here. The verb rendered 'harm' is interpreted by some (*e.g.* Schott) in the more specific sense of *making one out to be an evil-doer*. The point then would be that, however calumniated among men, they could not be made evil-doers in God's sight. The verb, however, usually means to do evil to one (Acts vii. 6, 19, xii. 1, xviii. 10), and that with the strong sense of harsh, injurious treatment; and the idea, therefore, is that, however ungenerously dealt with, they shall yet sustain no real hurt; they shall still be in God's safe keeping, and the blessedness of the new life within them will make them superior to the malice and enmity of men. Instead of the 'followers' (or, as it should rather be, 'imitators') of the A. V., the best authorities read 'zealots,' *i.e.* 'zealous,' or 'emulous.' Some render it 'followers of *Him who is good*,' but this is less likely.

Ver. 14 **But even if ye should have to suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye.** The old formula 'but and if,' which the A. V. took over here from the Vulgate and the Rhemish Version (it is not found here in Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, or the Genevan), is needlessly retained by the Revised Version in this passage, and in 1 Cor. vii. 28, although it is dropped in Matt. xxiv. 48. In Shakespeare we find both the phrases 'an if' and 'and if.' The word 'and' or 'an' seems to have been used in middle English, both as the copulative conjunction and as the conditional *if*. A distinction then was made between them by the limitation of 'an' to the latter sense, and when this 'an' ceased to carry its meaning on its face, the word 'if' was added for the sake of clearness.

Thus arose the double form 'an if' or 'and if,' which is really equivalent to 'if-if.' Here it may be rendered *even if*, or, *if notwithstanding*. It introduces a case which is supposed to be possible, but which at the same time is represented as of small moment in comparison with what has been just stated. The case supposed is also differently expressed. It is not that of having *evil* done to one, but simply that of having to *suffer;* and, therefore, it is nothing inconsistent with the fact asserted so confidently in the previous interrogation. They may have their *afflictions*, but they will be safe against real hurt or evil. Their *blessedness* will not be affected by the former, but will make them contribute to that sanctified life within, where blessedness finds its shrine. Matt. v. 10 is probably in Peter's mind. —**but fear not their fear.** These words and the following are taken freely from Isa. viii. 12, 13. They may mean, 'be not afraid of the fear which they cause,' which might be equivalent either to 'be not afraid of them,' or to 'be not afraid of what they threaten or inflict' (comp. Ps. xci. 5). Most interpreters prefer this sense, and so it is understood by various of the Versions. Tyndale and the Genevan, *e.g.*, give 'fear not though they seem terrible unto;' Cranmer, 'be not afraid for any terror of them.' This implies, indeed, a departure from Isaiah's meaning, but it fits in excellently with Peter's present subject. In the prophet, however, the words are intended to check the godly from being carried away by the terrors which troubled their unbelieving fellow-countrymen. If their original sense, therefore, is to be retained, they must be taken here, too, to mean 'fear not what they fear,' 'give way to no such terrors as agitate them.' The contrast then will be between the alarms and disquietudes which the ills of life excite in those who have no faith in God, and the perfect peace in which those should be kept 'whose mind is stayed on God.'— **neither be troubled:** the strong term expressive of *agitation* is used here, which describes Herod's trouble, Matt. ii. 3; the trouble of the disciples on the sea, xiv. 26; the trouble of Christ's own spirit at the grave of Lazarus, John xi. 33, etc. At times the fear of man had been Peter's deadliest snare and bitterest misery. It is not strange that he should bear this witness to the inconsistency of such fear with the life of gladness and goodness.

Ver. 15. **but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.** The A. V., following Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan, adopts the reading of the *Textus Receptus*, viz. 'the Lord God.' The Vulgate, Wycliffe, and the Rhemish have 'the Lord Christ,' and this reading must be accepted as having by far the weightiest evidence on its side. The Revised Version rightly accepts it, giving it at the same time greater point by making the term 'Lord' not a mere name of Christ, but a predicate. The Greek, though not absolutely conclusive, is on the whole in favour of this rendering. Isaiah's words, therefore, are continued, but with two significant modifications. *Christ* takes the place of the *Jehovah of hosts*, who is presented in the prophecy as the object of sanctification, and the words 'in your hearts' are added in order to express the fact that this sanctification is not to be of a formal or external order, but to rest in the deepest seat of feeling. The term 'sanctify' here means to regard and honour as holy; and, as appears from the explanatory terms, 'let Him be your fear' and 'let Him be your dread' (viii. 13), it amounts to much the same as 'fear.' The fear of man is to be displaced by the fear of Christ, and of Him as our true Lord (comp. Luke xii. 4, 5). Thus 'the Apostle places before us Christ to be our Lord, and to be set up in our hearts as the object of reverence and godly fear, in words which the prophet of the Old Testament uses with regard to the Lord Jehovah' (Humphrey, *Comm. on the Revised Version*, p. 442).—**ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you.** The 'and' with which the A. V. introduces this sentence is not found in the best manuscripts. This makes it more probable that what now follows is not to be taken as a distinct counsel, '*be* ready,' etc., but as in intimate connection with the preceding statement. One way in which this sanctifying of Christ as Lord will express itself is in meeting fairly and frankly the difficulties and questionings of others. The inward homage to Him does not absolve from responsibility to others, or justify disregard of their inquiries. What it implies is neither on the one hand the reticence which fear or indifference may prompt, nor on the other the propensity to dispute about our hope, but a readiness to give an account of it, wherever it may be necessary or helpful to do so. The phrase means literally 'ready for an *apology*,' the noun being that which is variously rendered in our A. V. as 'answer' (Acts xxv. 16; 1 Cor. ix. 3; 2 Tim. iv. 16 and here), 'defence' (Acts xxii. 1; Phil. i. 7, 16) and 'clearing of oneself' (2 Cor. vii. 11). It has been supposed to refer here to official examination, or to legal processes such as Christians were subjected to under the Emperor Trajan. The general terms, however, in which the inquirers are described make it clear that what is in view is not readiness to face judicial investigation, but readiness to give at all fit times to all fit persons a reasonable defence or explanation of the Christian hope. The term 'apology' is used not in the popular sense of an excuse, but in that of an apologetical vindication. It was afterwards applied to the early treatises written in defence of the Christian faith by the so-called Apologists, Tatian, Theophilus, Athenagoras, etc. The times are defined by the 'always,' which covers all fit occasions, small or great, pleasant or the reverse. The *fit* persons are defined as embracing not indeed all and sundry, but all who ask 'an account' (a phrase occurring only here) of this hope, all who demand to know what can be said on the subject of a hope in One risen from the dead, which so manifestly makes new men of those whom it inspires. These are to be considerately met, and, if possible, satisfied.—**but (or, yet) with meekness and fear.** A qualification of the kind of satisfaction that is to be attempted,—a caution against an *over-readiness*, which, instead of conciliating, prejudices and hurts. The spirit of truth, says Leighton, is itself the 'spirit of meekness—the dove that rested on that great champion of truth, who is truth itself.' This 'meekness' (on which see also ver. 4) is another of those virtues which have been so elevated and enriched by the Gospel as to be made practically new things. In the old Greek system of morals it had, indeed, a better place assigned it than was allowed

to the quality of humility (on which see ver. 8). In the ethical teaching of men like Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch, it is commended as the virtue by which a man retains his equanimity, as the mean between the extremes of passionateness and insensibility, and as the opposite of rudeness, severity, harshness. So far, therefore, it had a good sense, where humility had the reverse. It remained, nevertheless, on a comparatively low platform, and with a value essentially superficial. Christianity carried it far beyond this, giving it a deeper seat than natural disposition, a loftier sphere of action than our relation to other men, a happier connection with humble-mindedness (comp. Eph. iv. 2; Col. ii. 12), at once a more *inward* and a more *Godward* aspect. Having its roots in the Christian consciousness of sin, it is first of all a grace with a Godward aspect (comp. Matt. xi. 29; Jas. i. 21), 'the temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting' (Trench). It is, in the second place, the disposition to meet whatever demand is made upon us by the oppositions and sins of our fellow-men in the spirit which is born of the sense of our own ill-desert in God's sight. So it is set over against a contentious spirit (Tit. iii. 2), want of consideration for offenders (Gal. vi. 1), and harshness toward opponents (2 Tim. ii. 24), etc. The 'fear' which is to be coupled with it is best understood neither as the fear of God exclusively, nor as the fear of man specifically, but more generally as the dread of doing or saying anything out of harmony with the solemnity of the interests involved—'that reverential fear,' as Bishop Butler expresses it, 'which the nature of religion requires, and which is so far from being inconsistent with, that it will inspire, proper courage towards men.' While we are to be ready with our answer, it is not to be given in a forward, irreverent, or arrogant spirit. Reference is appropriately made (by Alford, etc.) to the interpretation put upon this counsel by one who had the best title to speak, the hero of Augsburg and Worms: 'Then must ye not answer with proud words, and state your cause with defiance and with violence, as if you would tear up trees, but with such fear and humility as if ye stood before the judgment-seat of God; so shouldest thou stand in fear, and not rely on thy own strength, but on the word and promise of Christ.'

Ver. 16. **having a good conscience**, or, *having your conscience unimpaired*. The term *conscience* seems to make a nearer approach in this passage than in the previous (see on chap. ii. 19) to the modern philosophical definitions of it as the 'principle of reflection in men by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove, their own actions' (Bishop Butler, Sermon I.), and as at once exponent of moral law, judge, and sentiment (comp. M'Cosh, *Div. Govern.* p. 291, etc.). Even here, however, nothing is said about its abstract nature, or its psychology. It is a purely practical statement of how the moral consciousness works. The moral quality of a man's actions is attested to him, according to the Old Testament, by the *heart*, specially as that is aided and enlightened by the revelation of God's law, or quickened by the application which the prophets ('the conscience of Israel,' as they are called) make of the facts of redemption. In the New Testament it is by a *light* within the man (Matt. vi. 33; Luke xi. 34–36), or by this inner witness, termed *conscience* in the Epistles, by which is meant primarily a 'consciousness which the man has of himself in his relation to God, manifesting itself in the form of a self-testimony, the result of the action of the Spirit in the heart' (Cremer). It may be *weak* (1 Cor. viii. 7, 12), *evil* (Heb. x. 22), *defiled* (Tit. i. 15), *seared* (1 Tim. iv. 2). But on the other hand it may be *pure* (2 Tim. i. 3), *void of offence* (Acts xxiv. 16), or *good* (here and at ver. 21; as also Acts xxiii. 1; 1 Tim i. 5, 19; Heb. xiii. 18). In the last-named passage its goodness is expressed by an epithet meaning *honourable* or *fair to see*. Here it is described by an epithet which refers to intrinsic moral quality. As there is an awkwardness, however, in attributing moral qualities to the conscience itself (we can scarcely speak, *e.g.*, of a *holy* conscience), in this connection the adjective may perhaps have the sense of *unimpaired*, *uninjured* (see Cremer's *Biblico-theol. Lex. to the N. T.*). The readiness to 'give an answer' receives thus another important qualification. It is essential that it be given not only in meekness and fear, but in the calm, clear strength of a mind conscious of nothing in the walk to give the lie to the apology. In vindicating to others the hope that is in ourselves, we must be able to point to the witness of the life in confirmation of the words:

> 'Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
> Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.'
> —*Fletcher.*

—**in order that in the matter wherein ye are spoken against they may be put to shame who abuse your good behaviour** (or, *manner of life*) **in Christ**. The construction and the sense are similar to what we have had already in ii. 12, which see. The words 'as evil-doers,' which are inserted here by the A. V., and some weighty manuscripts and Versions, are omitted by the Revised Version and some of the best critics. There is a similar division of opinion among textual experts as to whether we should read in the first clause, 'ye are spoken against' (which is preferred by the Revised Version), or 'they speak evil of you,' as in the A. V. The verb, which the A. V. translates 'falsely accuse,' occurs only twice again in the Received Text of the N. T., viz. in Matt. v. 44 (where, however, it is rejected by the best critics as insufficiently attested), and Luke vi. 28, where it is rendered 'despitefully use.' As in classical Greek it has the sense of *insulting*, *acting insolently* to one, *abusively threatening* one, it is best rendered here 'abuse,' or (with R. V.) 'revile,' and the reference will therefore be to coarse and insolent misrepresentation of the way in which Christians live in the face of heathenism, rather than to 'accusations' in the stricter sense. 'Thus, without stirring,' says Leighton, 'the integrity of a Christian conquers: as a rock, unremoved, breaks the waters that are dashing against it. . . . And without this good conscience and conversation we cut ourselves short of other apologies for religion, whatever we may say for it. One unchristian action will disgrace it more than we can repair by the largest and best framed speeches on its behalf.'

CHAPTER III. 17–22.

Christian Endurance of Wrong enforced by Christ's constant Graciousness to the worst of Wrong-Doers, above all to those of Noah's time.

17 FOR it is [a] better,[1] if the [b] will of God be so,[2] that ye suffer
18 for [c] well-doing, than for [d] evil-doing.[3] For Christ also hath[4] [e] once suffered [f] for[5] sins, the [g] just for[6] the [h] unjust,[7] that he might [i] bring us to God, being [k] put to death in the
19 [l] flesh,[8] but [m] quickened by the [n] Spirit:[9] by which[10] also he
20 [o] went and [p] preached unto the [q] spirits in [r] prison; which [s] sometime were [t] disobedient,[11] when once[12] the [u] long-suffering of God [v] waited[13] in the [w] days of Noah, while the [x] ark was [y] a-preparing,[14] wherein[15] few, [z] that is, eight [a] souls, were
21 [b] saved by[16] water. The like [c] figure whereunto[17] *even* [d] baptism doth also now [e] save us, (not the [f] putting away of the [g] filth of the flesh, but the [h] answer[18] of a good [i] conscience
22 toward God,) by[19] the [k] resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is [l] gone into [m] heaven, and is on the [n] right hand of God; [20] angels and [o] authorities and [p] powers being[21] made [q] subject unto him.

[a] 1 Cor. vii. 9, 38; Phil. i. 23; Heb. i. 4, vi. 9, vii. 7, 19, 22, viii. 6, ix. 23, x. 34, xi. 16, 35, 40; 2 Pet. iii. 22.
[b] Ch. i. 6.
[c] See refs. on ch. ii. 15.
[d] Mk. iii. 4; 3 Jo. 11.
[e] Heb. ix. 26–28; Jude 3, 5; also 2 Cor. xii. 25; Phil. iv. 16; 1 Thes. ii. 18; Heb. vi. 4, ix. 7, x. 2, xii. 26, 27.
[f] Rom. viii. 3; Heb. x. 8.
[g] 1 Jo. ii. 1.
[h] Mat. v. 45; Acts xxiv. 15.
[i] Gen. xlviii. 9. Cf. also Lu. ix. 41; Acts xvi. 20.
[k] Mat. x. 21, xxvi. 59, xxvii. 1;
Mk. xiii. 12, xiv. 55; Lu. xxi. 16; Rom. vii. 4, viii. 13, 36; 2 Cor. vi. 9.
[l] Ch. iv. 1, 6; Gal. iii. 3. Cf. also Rom. i. 3; 1 Tim. iii. 16.
[m] 1 Cor. xv. 22, 36, 45; Rom. iv. 17, viii. 11; Jo. v. 21.
[n] Ch. iv. 6; 1 Cor. v. 5; Gal. iii. 3.
[o] Ver. 22; Mk. xvi. 15.
[p] Mat. iii. 1, iv. 17, 23, ix. 35; Rom. ii. 21, x. 8, etc.
[q] Lu. xxiv. 37, 39; Acts vii. 59; Heb. xii. 23.
[r] Rev. xx. 7.
[s] See refs. to ch. ii. 7, 8.
[t] See refs. to ver. 5.
[u] Rom ii. 4, ix. 22; 2 Pet. iii. 15.
[v] Rom. viii. 19, 23, 25; 1 Cor. i. 7; Gal. v. 5; Phil. 20; Heb. ix. 28.
[w] Mat. xxiv. 37; Lu. xvii. 26.
[x] Mat. xxiv. 38; Lu. xvii. 27; Heb. xi. 7.
[y] Mat. xi. 10; Mk. i. 2; Lu. i. 17, vii. 27; Heb. iii. 3, 4, ix. 2, 6, xi. 7.
[z] Acts xix. 4; Philem. 12; Heb. ii. 14, vii. 5, ix. 11, x. 20, xi. 16, xiii. 15.
[a] Acts ii. 41, vii. 14, xxvii. 37.
[b] Mat. xiv. 36; Lu. vii. 3; Acts xxiii. 42, xxvii. 43, 44, xxviii. 1, 4.
[c] Heb. ix. 24.
[d] Mat. iii. 7, etc.; also Rom. vi. 4, Eph. iv. 5, etc.
[e] Ch. iv. 18; Acts ii. 47; 1 Cor. i. 18, xv. 2; 2 Cor. ii. 15.
[f] 2 Pet. i. 14.
[g] Job xiv. 4; Isa. iv. 4.
[h] Dan. iv. 14.
[i] See refs. to ver. 16.
[k] Acts i. 22; Phil. iii. 10.
[l] See refs. to ver. 19.
[m] Acts i. 11.
[n] Rom. viii. 34; Col. iii. 1; Heb. i. 3; Ps. xvi. 11.
[o] Eph. i. 21, iii. 10, vi. 12, etc.
[p] Mat. xxiv. 29; Rom. viii. 38; Eph. i. 21; Isa. xxxiv. 4.
[q] 1 Cor. xv. 27, 28; Heb. xii. 9, etc.

[1] *or*, preferable
[2] *literally*, if the will of God should will
[3] *literally*, to suffer, doing well rather than doing evil
[4] *omit* hath
[5] *i.e.* on account of
[6] *i.e.* in behalf of
[7] *or*, a righteous one for unrighteous ones
[8] as regards flesh, *or*, as regards the lower, bodily life
[9] as regards spirit, *or*, as regards the higher, spiritual life
[10] in which
[11] aforetime disobedient, *or*, when they were disobedient (*or*, disbelieving) aforetime
[12] *omit* once
[13] *literally*, was waiting
[14] was being prepared
[15] *literally*, into which
[16] by means of, *or*, through
[17] *literally*, which (water), the antitype, *or*, which as antitype; *i.e.* which antitypically, *or*, *as the R. V. gives it in the margin*, which in the antitype
[18] inquiry, *or*, *with R. V.*, interrogation
[19] through, *or*, by means of
[20] *rather*, who is on God's right hand, having gone into heaven
[21] having been

We are now brought face to face with one of the unsolved, if not insoluble, problems of New Testament interpretation. The remarkable paragraph about a preaching to the spirits in prison has been regarded by many eminent theologians as the primary proof text for the article of faith which is embodied in the creeds in the terms *He descended into hell*, on which so many different meanings have been put. It is one of three Petrine passages (Acts ii. 25–31; 1 Pet. iv. 6), which seem to many to be closely related. It is also one of a larger class, including Matt. xii. 40, Luke xxiii. 43, Rom. x. 6–8, Eph. iv. 8–10, Ps. xvi. 9–11, Acts xiii. 34–37, etc., which have been supposed to bear more or less directly upon a dogma for which an important place is claimed both in the system of Christian doctrine and in preaching—the dogma of a descent of Christ to

Hell or Hades. It has been drawn into the service of a singular variety of theological ideas, such as those of a liberation and elevation of the saints of pre-Christian times, a purgatorial detention and purification, a penal endurance of the extremity of God's wrath by man's Surety, a judicial manifestation of the victorious Redeemer to the impenitent dead, renewed opportunities of repentance and a continuous ministry of grace in the other world. The interpretations put upon the passage have been too numerous to admit of detailed statement, not to speak of criticism, here. We shall notice only those of deepest interest. It should at once be allowed that no exposition has yet succeeded in removing all the difficulties. There are some writers (*e.g.* Steiger) who venture to speak of these difficulties as rather created by interpreters than inherent in the passage itself. But these are few indeed. Many of the greatest exegetes and theologians have held a very uncertain position on the subject, or have confessed themselves baffled by it. Luther, for example, felt it to be a 'dark speech,' and inclined to very different views of its meaning at different periods of his career. It is at best a question of the balance of probabilities. We shall, therefore, first examine the various terms separately. When the usage and application of each of the disputed terms are carefully determined, it should be possible to decide on what side the balance of probabilities lies. The great problems are these: Does the section refer to a ministry of grace, a ministry of judgment, or a mere manifestation of Christ? Is the ministry, if such is referred to, one that took place prior to the Incarnation, between the Death and the Resurrection, or after the Resurrection? Are the men of Noah's generation introduced in their proper historical position, or only as examples of a general class? In considering these problems, two things are too often overlooked. It is forgotten how precarious it is to erect upon one or two of the obscurities of Scripture a great system of doctrine, which is not in evident harmony with the general view of grace which clearly pervades the Bible. It is forgotten, too, that the passage cannot fairly be dealt with as a doctrinal digression, but must be read in the light of the writer's immediate object. That object is the Christian duty of enduring wrong for righteousness' sake, and the advantage of suffering for well-doing rather than for ill-doing. It is with the view of confirming what he has said of this that Peter appeals to Christ's own example. The question consequently is, what exposition is best sustained by the detailed exegesis of the several terms, does most justice to the plainer elements in the paragraph, such as the historical reference to Noah and the building of the ark, etc., and is in clearest harmony with the writer's design, namely, to arm believers smarting under the sense of wrongful suffering with Christ-like endurance?

Ver. 17. **For it is better to suffer, if the will of God should will it, doing well than doing evil.** This statement resembles that in chap. ii. 20. It is also followed up, as was the case there, by an appeal to Christ's own case. The two propositions, however, have distinct points of difference. The present is introduced in immediate connection not with the *credit* attaching to a particular kind of conduct, but with what is essential to the keeping of a good conscience under the sense of wrong, and to the possibility of giving a right account of the Christian hope to inquirers or revilers. There Christ's own case is dealt with specially as an example of *endurance* which befits Christians. Here it is expounded mainly with a view to what His sufferings ultimately brought Him, in the form of a life quickened, exalted, and having now in its service angels and principalities and powers. The word rendered 'better' here is one which does not mean exactly what is of better moral quality, but rather what is of greater power or importance, and so what is *preferable* or of *greater advantage*. Thus, looking still at the pressing question of what Christian duty is under the burden of suffering for righteousness' sake, and how a blameless behaviour should at all hazards be studied in such circumstances, Peter meets the feeling which rises against unmerited suffering by reminding the sufferers of two considerations. These are, *first*, that nothing can befall them but by God's will; and *secondly*, that if it is God's will that they be subjected to painful things, their sufferings, instead of being embittered, should be softened and relieved by the consciousness that they are undeserved, and by the assurance that they will work together for their good. This last idea, namely, the gain which such sufferings will bring to the sufferers, is what is specially taken up and illustrated at length in the following paragraph.

Ver. 18. **Because also Christ died once for sins, a righteous one for unrighteous ones, in order that he might bring us to God.** There are two varieties of reading to notice here. Documentary evidence is pretty evenly balanced between the verb 'suffered' and the verb 'died.' Although the Revised Version retains the former, the latter is preferred by the majority of textual experts (Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, Gebhardt). Instead of 'bring *us* to God' (which is accepted by the Revised Version and most critics), 'bring *you* to God' is adopted by Westcott and Hort. Christ's suffering or dying is represented to have taken place *on account of* sin, *in the matter of* sin, or *in respect of* sin; for the preposition used here has this general sense. It is said to have taken place also 'once,' once for all and no more (cp. Rom. vi. 10; Heb. vii. 27, ix. 28). This may possibly embody the idea that this suffering or dying superseded the necessity of all further suffering or dying of the same kind, either on the part of Christ Himself or on that of Christians (so Schott). It is rather introduced, however, to suggest the difference between the suffering or death, however bitter that was, as finished shortly and once for all, and the continuous power and blessedness of the life which was its issue. Still greater force is given to this by the use of the simple historical tense 'died,' which throws all that was painful in Christ's instance completely into the past. But Christ's suffering or dying is also described as that of 'a righteous One for unrighteous ones.' A different preposition is now used for the 'for,'—one meaning *in behalf of*, or, *to the advantage of*. It is possible that in the present connection, where the righteous and the unrighteous are set so decisively over against each other, this idea of suffering *in behalf of* others may pass over into, or imply, that of suffering in the place of others. Weiss, *e.g.* (so also Huther), recognises the idea of substitution at the basis of the statement, in so far as 'the contrast, which is made so prominent

between the righteous and the unrighteous, necessarily produces the idea that the suffering which was endured in behalf of these, ought really to have been endured by the righteous themselves' (*Bib. Theol. of the New Testament*, i. p. 232, Clark's Trans.). The more general idea, however, is the one distinctly in view here, and thus there is warning mingled with the encouragement which is conveyed by Christ's case as Peter here presents it. If it is right to speak, as Besser does, of the little word 'once' as letting 'a beam of comforting light fall on the sufferings of Christians,' this clause reminds them of the necessity of making sure that their sufferings be not of the kind which their own fault induces, but rather of the kind righteously borne with a view to the good of others. The particular good which Christ set before Him as the object of His suffering or dying was the *bringing us to God;* by which is meant *introducing* us to God, giving us admission, or the right of direct access, to God. This is the sense which the cognate noun has in the few passages in which it is found, viz. Rom. v. 2, Eph. ii. 18, iii. 12; and here, too, the idea is neither that of presenting us an *offering* to God (so the Vulgate, Luther, etc.), nor that of simply *reconciling* us to God, but (as it is rightly understood by Huther, etc.) that of introducing us to actual fellowship with God. This verse, therefore, establishes a certain analogy between Christ and Christians, in so far as He was made subject to suffering not less than they, and was made so not for His own fault but for that of others. This analogy is used, however, in support of the previous statement as to its being a better thing to suffer for good than for evil. Hence, having immediately in view the advantage or good which suffering for righteousness' sake brings with it, Peter goes at once (as formerly in chap. ii. 22, etc.) beyond the elements of similarity which might present the suffering Christ as an example to suffering Christians. He touches on more than one thing which gave Christ's sufferings a value all their own. They were of the unique order which (as the 'once' implies) neither required nor admitted repetition. And the gain which they secured, by which also they pre-eminently illustrate the good which suffering for righteousness' sake yields, and how preferable it is to suffer, if suffer we must, for well-doing rather than ill-doing, was the otherwise unattainable boon of a direct approach for sinners to God, a free intercourse with God.—**put to death indeed in flesh, but quickened in spirit.** Two things are here affirmed to have taken effect on Christ, when He suffered or died in order to bring us into this fellowship with God. These, however, are so balanced that the one appears simply as the preliminary to the other, and the attention is concentrated on the latter. The one is rightly given as a 'being *put* to death;' for the term does not mean, as some suppose, merely being *condemned* to death (compare its use, *e.g.*, in Matt. xxvi. 59, xxvii. 1; Rom. viii. 36; 2 Cor. vi. 9, etc.). The other is correctly interpreted not as a 'being *kept* alive' (which idea is expressed in the New Testament by different terms), but as a 'being quickened' or 'made alive;' the word being that which is elsewhere (John v. 21; Rom. iv. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 22, etc.) applied to the raising of the dead to life. To the two things are added definitions of two distinct spheres in which they severally took effect. These are conveyed each by a single noun, which has almost an adverbial force here, viz., 'in flesh,' *i.e. fleshly-wise*, or, as regards the natural, earthly order of life; and 'in spirit,' *i.e. spirit-wise*, or, as regards the higher spiritual order of life. Those two terms are analogous to other antithetical phrases which are applied to Christ, such as 'according to the flesh' and 'according to the spirit of holiness' (Rom. i. 3), manifest 'in the flesh,' and judged 'in the spirit' (1 Tim. iii. 16). They point to two different forms of existence, a natural, mortal form of existence associated with flesh, and a supernatural, immortal form of existence associated with spirit,—in other words, a perishable, corporeal life, and an imperishable, spiritual or incorporeal life. As regards the one, He ceased to live it by being put to death. As regards the other, He continued to live it, and to live it with new power, by being quickened. The A. V., therefore, is entirely at fault in rendering the second clause 'by the Spirit,' as if the reference were to the Holy Spirit and to Him as the Agent in Christ's resurrection. In this, too, it has deserted the versions of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, Geneva, and Rheims, which all give 'in spirit' or 'in the spirit.'

Ver. 19. **in which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison.** Here, again, the A.V., following the Genevan alone among these earlier English Versions, wrongly renders '*by* which.' The sense is, 'in which,' *i.e.* in the spiritual form of life which has just been noticed. The verb 'preached' is used absolutely here. It is not to be taken, however, in the vague sense of making *proclamation*, showing Himself, or bearing witness to Himself (Schott, etc.), far less in the sense of preaching *judgment*, but in the sense which it elsewhere has in the New Testament, where it occurs, both with the object expressed (*e.g. the gospel, the kingdom of God, Christ*, etc.), and with the object unexpressed (*e.g.* Matt. xi. 1; Mark i. 38, etc.), of Christ's earthly ministry of preaching, which was a message of grace. The word 'spirits' is used here, as in Heb. xii. 23, in the sense of disembodied spirits. Elsewhere (*e.g.* Rev. vi. 9, xx. 4) the term 'souls' is used to designate the departed. On the ground of the statement in 2 Pet. ii. 4, and the application of the word 'spirit' in such passages as Luke ix. 39, Acts xvi. 18, etc., some have strangely supposed a reference here to the angels who sinned,—which is entirely inconsistent with the historical notice which follows. The phrase 'in prison' has the definite force which it has in 2 Pet. ii. 4, Jude 6, Rev. xx. 7, and is not to be explained away as merely equivalent to 'in safe-keeping,' or 'in the world of the dead' generally.

Ver. 20. **aforetime disobedient.** The 'disobedient' means here again, as in ii. 7, 8, iii. 1, *disbelieving*, refusing belief and withstanding truth. The clause may describe the 'spirits' according to the conduct which made them spirits 'in prison.' So it is understood by most. It may, however, also indicate the date of the disobedience. The latter view is more in harmony with the specification of time which immediately follows, the 'when' giving a more exact definition of the 'aforetime.' We should thus translate it: 'when of old they were disobedient, to wit, at the time when the long-suffering of God,' etc., rather than (with the R. V., etc.),

'which aforetime were disobedient,' etc.—**when the long-suffering of God was waiting.** The 'once' which is inserted by the A. V. has very little documentary evidence, and is supposed to have been due to a conjecture of Erasmus. The 'waiting' is given in the imperfect tense to bring out its lengthened continuance. It is expressed, too, by a verb for which Paul has a particular fondness, and which conveys the idea of the *intenseness* or *patience* of the waiting. It is applied to the 'earnest expectation' of the creation (Rom. viii. 19), the 'waiting' of those who have the first-fruits of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 23, 25), the *waiting* for 'the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. i. 7), or for 'the hope of righteousness by faith' (Gal. v. 5), the *looking* 'for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ' (Phil. iii. 20). Outside Paul it occurs only here and in Heb. ix. 28.—**in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared.** Both the date and the duration at once of the Divine waiting and of the men's disobedience are thus more clearly defined, the date being identified with the times immediately prior to the flood, and the duration with the whole period of warning afforded by the construction of the Ark, which is indicated to have extended to 120 years (Gen. vi. 3).—**in which few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.** Literally it is '*into* which,' *i.e.* =by entering into which, etc. By 'souls' are meant here *individuals* or *persons*. The word 'soul,' meaning *life* or the *principle of life*, comes to mean *life embodied*, or the living individual. Occasionally, however (see above on 'spirits'), it designates the departed. The mention of the precise number saved serves to throw into still stronger light both the disobedience to which the long-suffering of God addressed itself, and the grace that failed not to separate the believing few. There is considerable difference of opinion as to what is meant by the 'saved through water.' The 'through,' which the A. V. renders 'by,' may have either a local sense or an instrumental. In the former case the idea will be either that those few were saved by *passing through* the water, or that they were brought safely through water into the ark. This latter seems favoured in the margin of the Revised Version, which gives 'into which few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through water.' In favour of this local sense (which is preferred by Bengel, de Wette, etc.) we have the analogous phrase 'saved, yet so as *by* (or, *through*) fire' (1 Cor. iii. 15). But we are left thus with no obvious connection between this mention of water and the following notice of a salvation by water. Most interpreters, therefore, accept the instrumental sense, taking the thought to be that water was the *means* by which these few were saved. As Huther rightly observes, however, there is nothing to suggest that Peter meant that the same water which was the means of destruction to the mass was the means of safety to the few. All that he has in view is (as the indefinite 'water,' not '*the* water,' indicates) that it was by means of water that the few entering the ark which floated thereon were preserved. And this relation of water to the preservation of the righteous at the time of the Flood is introduced in view of what is to be said of the relation of water, namely that of Baptism, to the salvation of Christian believers now.

Ver. 21. **which also in the antitype now saves you, namely baptism.** The rendering of the A. V., 'the like figure *whereunto*,' follows a reading which is now given up. The best authorities also substitute 'you' for 'us.' Some interpreters regard both the *Ark* and the '*few*' as having a typical force here. Consequently they seek for an antitype to the Ark in the *Christ* into whose name we are baptized, and without whom baptism can as little save us as the water of the Flood could save without the Ark. They also find an antitype for the 'few' in the 'you,' as if the idea were that the 'proportion of those saved by baptism to the unbelieving is but small' (so even Huther). But the only things which Peter sets distinctly in the relation of type and antitype are water as preserving life in Noah's generation, and water as saving souls in Peter's own generation. The comparison, therefore, is not between the Flood and Baptism, but simply between water in one service and water in another. What antitypical water is intended, is at once made clear by the appended definition, 'baptism.' Thus, as further explained, the comparison comes to be not between the saving efficacy of the water in which the Ark floated and the saving efficacy of *Baptismal water* in the Church of Christ, but between the saving efficacy of water in the former instance and the saving efficacy of *Baptism itself* now. The latter, like the former, has in a certain sense an instrumental relation to a saved state.—**not the putting away of the filth of the flesh.** This is thrown in to guard against any mistake which the comparison might provoke as to the kind of relation intended. The saving efficacy is not of a material kind like that exerted by water in the case of the Ark and its eight. For the baptism meant is something different from any merely physical cleansing, or any of those ceremonial washings with which both Jew and Gentile were sufficiently familiar. These two terms 'putting off' and 'filth' are peculiar to Peter. The former occurs again in 2 Pet. i. 14. What is meant is generally understood to be the putting off of the filth which *belongs to* the flesh. The peculiar order of the words in the original, however, gives not a little plausibility to another rendering which is adopted by Bengel, Huther, etc.,—the flesh's putting off of uncleanness, *i.e.* the laying aside of its own uncleanness by the flesh itself.—**but the inquiry of a good conscience toward God.** This sentence has greatly perplexed the commentators. The difficulty lies mainly in the use of the word rendered 'answer' by the A. V. This term occurs nowhere else in the N. T. The A. V. stands alone among the old English Versions in translating it 'answer.' Wycliffe gives 'the asking of a good conscience in God;' Tyndale and Cranmer have 'in that a good conscience consenteth to God;' the Genevan has 'in that a good conscience maketh request to God;' the Rhemish renders it 'the examination of a good conscience toward God.' The only meanings of the word which can be verified are these two, viz. (1) an *interrogation* or *question*, which is the classical sense (*e.g.* Herod. vi. 67; Thucyd. iii. 53, 68), and (2) a *petition, demand*, or *the thing asked by petition*, in which sense it occurs once in one of the old Greek Versions of Daniel (iv. 14, *i.e.* iv. 17 of the English Bible). The question, therefore, is—What results from this for the sentence as a whole? Among other renderings which

have been proposed are these: (1) *the request* (*i.e.* for salvation or grace) *addressed to God by a good conscience;* (2) *the questioning*, or *examination, to which a good conscience is subjected before God;* (3) *the request made to God for a good conscience;* (4) *the inquiry made by a good conscience after God*, or, *the act of a good conscience in seeking after God;* (5) *the promise*, or *pledge, to keep a good conscience toward God;* (6) *the contract*, or *relation, entered into with God by a good conscience.* The last two interpretations find favour with many of the best exegetes (Grotius, de Wette, Huther, Plumptre, etc.), and are supported more or less by some of the old versions. The Syriac, *e.g.*, takes the sense to be = *when ye confess God with a pure conscience.* The form mentioned last of all has the undoubted advantage of giving a clear and pertinent idea, viz., that 'the person baptized, by the reception of baptism, enters into a relation—as it were of contract—with God, in which he submits in faith to God's promise of salvation' (so Huther, who now prefers this view). It does not make the phrase a 'good conscience' a synonym here for a 'reconciled conscience,' but retains for it the simpler sense which is more in harmony with similar expressions in Heb. xiii. 18; Acts xxiii. 1; 1 Tim. i. 5, 19, iii. 9; 1 Pet. iii. 16, viz., that this is done with a *pure intention.* It also founds upon the primitive practice of addressing certain questions to the applicant for baptism and obtaining certain replies from him, such, *e.g.*, as these: *Dost thou renounce Satan?—I do renounce him. Dost thou believe in Christ?—I do believe in Him.* So Neander (*Ch. Hist.*, vol. i. pp. 424, 427, Bohn) regards this as the clearest trace within the New Testament itself of a confession of faith which had to be made from the first at baptism, and thinks that the passage according to the most natural interpretation 'refers to the question proposed at baptism, the word "question" being used here by metonymy for the "pledge or answer to the question."' This interpretation, however, is open to an objection that is almost fatal, namely, that the use of the word which is rendered 'answer' in our A. V. in this sense of *stipulation, contract*, or *covenant*, is entirely foreign to the Bible, and indeed to early Ecclesiastical Greek, and belongs to the juristic terminology of a later period. More or less difficulty attaches to the other views. Thus (4), which is adopted by Alford, etc., and (3), which is preferred by Weiss, Hofmann, etc., are both sustained by the analogous use of the cognate verb in 2 Kings xi. 7, where it is said that 'David *inquired after* the peace of Joab.' They also yield good meanings. But they both do so at the cost of departing somewhat from the known sense of the noun, while the former further identifies the phrase '*good* conscience' with the more definite, theological idea of a '*reconciled* conscience.' Perhaps the meaning is simply this: *the interrogation which is addressed to God by a good conscience.* This resembles the interpretation numbered (1), which is that of Bengel, Steiger, etc. It adheres, however, to the strict sense of the noun, where that is modified by Bengel. It also gives effect to the peculiar order of the original, instituting a comparison between the flesh with the putting off of uncleanness which is ascribed to it, and the conscience with the interrogation which it is said to direct to God. Further, it retains for the phrase 'good conscience' here the general sense which it has in the 16th verse of the same chapter. Hence what Peter intends seems to be to explain that, when he speaks of baptism as having a saving efficacy, he does not mean a mere ceremonial washing, but one which carries a moral value with it, a baptism which means that in all pureness of conscience and sincerity of desire the soul's interrogation about salvation itself is submitted to God, and God's response closed with.—**through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.** This is connected by some (Fronmüller, etc.) with the 'good conscience,' as if the resurrection of Christ were the basis of the good conscience. By others it is attached to the 'question,' or to its clause as a whole, as if it were only on the ground of the resurrection of Christ that the soul's question can be addressed to God. Most, however, unite it with the 'doth now save you,' regarding all that comes between as a parenthesis. In this case the sentence conveys an explanation of the saving efficacy which is ascribed to baptism, as the parenthesis gave an explanation of what the baptism itself was which Peter had in view. The relation in which baptism stands to salvation is, therefore, a relation which it has only in virtue of, or on the ground of (cf. '*by* the mercies of God' in Rom. xii. 1), the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What has already been described as the ground or means of our regeneration (chap. i. 3), is now re-introduced as the ground of the spiritual value which belongs to the rite which is a sign and seal of that regeneration. Peter speaks of baptism here, only with more qualification in his terms, much in the same way as Paul does when he terms it the 'washing (or, laver) of regeneration' (Tit. iii. 5), or when he describes those who have been 'baptized into Christ' as having actually 'put on Christ' (Gal. iii. 27). 'As Paul, in speaking of the Church, presupposes that the outward Church is the visible community of the redeemed; so he speaks of baptism on the supposition that it corresponded to its idea, that all that was inward, whatever belonged to the holy rite and its complete observance, accompanied the outward; hence he could assert of outward baptism whatever was involved in a believing appropriation of the Divine facts which it symbolized; whatever was realized when baptism corresponded to its original design' (Neander, *Planting of Christianity*, vol. i. pp. 495, 496, Bohn).

Ver. 22. **who is on the right hand of God.** A familiar phrase expressing 'the regal and judiciary power' to which Christ is exalted. Compare such passages as Rom. viii. 34; Eph. i. 20; Col. iii. 1; Phil. iii. 20; Heb. i. 3; and the fundamental O. T. passage, Ps. cx. 1.—**having gone into heaven.** The verb is the same as the 'went' in ver. 19,—with the important difference, however, that here the going is not said to have been 'in spirit' or 'spirit-wise.' The phrase is important, as it presupposes, if it does not expressly state, Peter's affirmation of Christ's Ascension.—**angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to him.** These terms, and others of a similar kind, are often used, especially by Paul, as designations of the various powers of the heavenly world (cf. Rom. viii. 38; Eph. i. 21, 22; Col. i. 16, ii. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 27; Heb. ii. 8). Whether they describe these simply according to their several relations

to God and to the world, or according to their several ranks and orders, is not easy to determine. In favour of the latter view, however, appeal is made to Christ's own words in Matt. xviii. 10, which are taken by many (*e.g.* Meyer) to assume differences of rank or class among the angels. The application of these two terms *authorities* and *powers* to the angels is peculiar to Paul, the present being the only non-Pauline instance. The three names are used here not with the view of expressing any particular relation in which they stand one to another, but simply as names covering generally all the heavenly powers over which Christ is supreme. It has been supposed that the various clauses of this verse came from some doxology, or from some form of faith professed by candidates for baptism. This, however, is uncertain. The point of the verse is to bring out the heightened power which resulted to Christ from His suffering and death, and thus to crown the train of statement by which the blessing of suffering for righteousness' sake is enforced. The particular climax in the verse is lost to the English reader through the inversion of the order of the Greek in the A. V. The order is not, 'who is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God,' etc., but, as in the R. V., 'who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven,' etc. That is to say, Peter first states the fact that He who died in the cause of others is now exalted to the highest place of honour next to God Himself, then explains that He came to this place by passing into heaven itself, and finally adds that being elevated to the place of the heavenly powers He now has all these powers subject to Him and in His service.—In the light of this examination of the train of thought and the usage of the disputable terms which occur in this verse, what verdict may now be ventured on the leading solutions of this enigma of the New Testament? Several of these are at once and entirely discredited by the plainest *data* of the exegesis. This is the case (1) with the idea, which has commended itself to interpreters like Grotius, Dr. John Brown, and (to some extent) Leighton, that the preaching affirmed is simply that addressed by the risen Christ through His apostles to men of their own time, who were in bondage to the law or in captivity to sin.—This overlooks the fact that Christ Himself, and not Christ through the Apostles, is represented as the preacher. It puts a gloss upon the phrase 'spirits in prison.' It also takes the disobedient of Noah's time simply as types of the disobedient of apostolic times. The same holds good (2) of the view advocated by many distinguished Lutherans, that Christ went and proclaimed judgment, or made a judicial manifestation of Himself, to the impenitent in the world of the dead (of whom those of Noah's time are mentioned as exemplary of all, or as the worst of all), and that this was done not by the soul of the dead Christ, but by the revivified Christ during the interval between His quickening and His actual resurrection. This interpretation, which was that of the old Lutheran theologians, is inconsistent with the usage of the word 'preached,' which denotes not a message of judgment or condemnation, but a message of grace. It is adhered to, in so far as regards the assertion of a descent and message to the world of the dead by Christ after His restoration to life and before His reascent to earth, by many exegetes who otherwise differ from each other as to the object of the Descent (*e.g.* Schott, de Wette, Wiesinger, Huther, etc.). But in all forms it substitutes the *Restored Christ*, or Christ in His *spiritual body*, for Christ in a spiritual mode of activity (which is what Peter affirms) as the Preacher who goes with the message. Not less inadmissible is (3) the Patristic view, that in the period between His death and His resurrection Christ went and preached to the righteous dead of Old Testament times in their place of intermediate detention, with the view of perfecting their salvation. This interpretation has been connected by Roman Catholic theologians both with their doctrine of a *Limbus Patrum*, and with that of Purgatory. It has been adopted in part by some Protestants of note, including both Zwingli and Calvin; the latter of whom takes the 'spirits in prison' to mean the spirits 'on the watch-tower, in expectation of Christ.' But this view does violence to the sense of the word rightly rendered *prison*. A different position must be allowed (4) to another line of interpretation which has seldom wanted advocates, and which secures the adhesion of many of the best expositors of our own time, namely, that which discovers here a ministry of grace, in the proper sense of the word, on the part of the disembodied Christ in the world of the dead. This is held in a variety of forms. Some think the passage points to a second grade of probation open to all, righteous and unrighteous, in the intermediate state (Heard, Lange, etc.). Others regard it as meaning that after His death Christ descended to Hades as the herald of grace to the men of Noah's generation, but only to those who had repented at the crisis of their death in the Deluge (Bengel, Birks, etc.). There are those again who see in it a more general reference to the men of the Flood, as men to whom some compensation was made through Christ in the other world for the shortening of their opportunities in the present. Bishop Horsley, *e.g.*, believes it to be one of several passages in which we may observe 'an anxiety, if the expression may be allowed, of the sacred writers to convey distinct intimations that the antediluvian race is not uninterested in the redemption and final retribution.' Yet another class of interpreters recognises in it a *bona fide* proclamation of the Gospel in Hades, either in the form of an offer of grace to those who had it not in this world, or in that of a renewed offer of grace with renewed opportunities of repentance to all. It is supposed, therefore, to furnish some warrant for cherishing the 'larger hope.' At present it is expounded by not a few eminent exegetes in the interest of 'wider and happier thoughts as to the state of the dead,' and in support of the belief that beyond the grave 'the love which does not will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, proclaims evermore to the spirits in prison, as during the hours of the Descent into Hades, the glad tidings of reconciliation' (Plumptre). There are serious difficulties, however, in the way of this interpretation. Besides the fact that it crosses the analogy of the faith, running athwart the clear and consistent doctrine of Scripture, that the present life is the theatre of human destinies and the scene of probation and grace, it is exegetically faulty at various points. It gives the passage little more than the value of a digression. It introduces into the important phrase 'in which'

(ver. 19) a different meaning from its antecedent, making it equivalent not to 'in which spirit,' or 'in which spiritual mode of being,' but to 'in which *disembodied*, or *quickened*, *spirit*,' and thus representing the Preacher not as Christ in a particular form of life and activity (which is Peter's statement), but as the disembodied or quickened Christ. It fails to give any adequate reason for the exact specification of the time of the disobedience, and for the mention of the men of Noah's day only. It reduces to something like mere descriptive accessories the details about the building of the Ark, the Divine waiting, and the salvation of eight souls. The preaching which it affirms is one the results of which are in no way indicated, and the introduction of which at this point is in no obvious connection with Peter's exhortation. What motive to a life of well-doing and of patience under injury in this world lies in the statement that, in the other world, the disobedient and injurious have the Gospel preached to them through Christ's descent to Hades?

There is, however, (5) another method of interpretation, which has been followed more or less since Augustine gave it the sanction of his great name. It has secured the general assent of men like Aquinas, Hugo of St. Victor, Bede, Beza, Gerhard, Turretin, and, more recently, of Besser, Hofmann, Schweitzer, etc. It takes the preaching to have happened not in Hades but upon the earth, not during the period between Christ's death and resurrection but in Noah's time. In one point of importance, however, this interpretation required, and has recently received, a precision which it had not in the hands of its older advocates. The Preacher must be understood to be Christ Himself, not Noah or Christ speaking by Noah. What is affirmed, therefore, is a gracious activity on the part of the pre-incarnate Christ, a preaching in the form of the Divine warnings of the time, the spectacle of the building of the Ark, etc. This we believe to be the exposition which best satisfies the condition of the exegesis. The two main objections urged against it are, that the phrase 'spirits in prison' becomes equivalent to 'spirits *now* in prison,' and that the word 'went,' which implies local motion, is improperly used. But the answer to the latter lies in the Old Testament method of speaking of Jehovah as *coming*, *going*, *ascending*, and in the analogous use of the verb 'came' in Eph. ii. 17. And as to the former objection, if in this view there is a difference of time supposed between the preaching and the state of imprisonment, in the other views there is a difference of time supposed between the preaching and the disobedience. On the other hand, the arguments in favour of this interpretation are numerous and weighty. It retains the natural sense for all the capital terms—*flesh*, *spirit*, *quickened*, *preached*, *prison*, etc. It preserves the same Subject all through, namely Christ as the Subject put to death, Christ as the Subject quickened, Christ (not the *quickened* Christ or the disembodied Christ) as the Subject preaching, Christ as the Subject exalted. It accounts for the definite statement of the time of the disobedience. It starts not with what is obscure in the section, viz. the phrase 'spirits in prison,' but with what is clear and unambiguous, viz. the historical reference to the Flood, and lets that direct the exposition. It seeks the key to the problem of the passage in Peter's own writings, particularly in what he says of an activity of the pre-incarnate Christ, or the Spirit of Christ, in the O. T. prophets (1 Pet. i. 11). It gives an intelligible reason for the details about Noah's time, the building of the Ark being instanced as one of the means by which Christ preached to the men of that generation. It helps us to understand why Peter goes on to notice Christ's present position of power and honour at God's right hand. It bears most directly on the injunction to a Christ-like behaviour under wrong, in relation to which the whole section is brought in. For it points the readers to the graciousness which has always been seen in the case of their Lord, and which He has never failed to exhibit towards even the worst of wrong-doers. The strain of the paragraph, therefore, amounts to this: Be content to suffer. It is a blessing to do so, provided ye suffer for well-doing, not for ill-doing. Look to Christ's example—how He did good to the most unworthy and died for the unjust. Think, too, what the issue of suffering was to Him—how, if He suffered even unto death as regards the mortal side of existence, He was raised thereby as regards the spiritual to a life of heightened power. Look back, also, on the distant past; ere He had yet submitted to the limitations of the flesh, and when He had that supernatural order of being into which He has risen again. Reflect how then too He was true to this gracious character, how He went and preached to that guiltiest generation of the Flood, making known to those grossest of wrong-doers, by the spectacle of the Ark a-building, the agency of His servant Noah, and the varied warnings of the time, His will to save them. And consider that He has the same graciousness still, of which baptism is the figure—that He can still save oppressed righteous ones as He saved the believing souls of Noah's house, that all the more indeed can He now save such, seeing that in His exalted life He has all the powers of heaven made subject to Him.

CHAPTER IV. 1–6.

Further Exhortations based upon the facts of Christ's Sufferings and Death, and directed specially to the Renunciation of all Gentile Impurity.

1 FORASMUCH then as Christ hath [a]suffered[1] for us[2] in
the flesh,[3] arm yourselves likewise[4] with the same
mind: [b] for[6] he that hath suffered in the flesh[7] hath ceased
2 from sin; [8] that he no longer should [b] live[9] the [c] rest of *his*
time[10] in the flesh to[11] the [d] lusts of men, but to[11] the will of
3 God. For [e] the time past of *our* life may [f] suffice[12] us to have
[g] wrought the [h] will[13] of the Gentiles, when we [i] walked[14] in
[k] lasciviousness,[15] [l] lusts, [m] excess of wine,[16] [n] revellings, [o] ban-
4 quetings,[17] and [p] abominable[18] [q] idolatries: wherein[19] they
[r] think it strange that[20] ye [s] run not with *them* to the same
5 excess[21] of [t] riot,[22] [u] speaking evil of *you*:[23] who shall [v] give
account to him that is [w] ready to [x] judge the quick and the
6 dead. For, [y] for this cause[24] was the Gospel preached also to
them that are dead, that they might be judged [z] according to
men in[25] the [a] flesh, but live [b] according to God in[25] the
[c] spirit.

[a] See refs. at ch. iii. 18.
[b] Prov. vii. 2; Job xxix. 18.
[c] Isa. xxxviii. 10.
[d] See refs. at ch. ii. 11.
[e] Mat. xxiv. 15; Acts xxvii. 9.
[f] Mat. vi. 34, x 25.
[g] Rom. i. 27, ii. 9, iv. 15, v. 3, vii. 8, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, xv. 18; 1 Cor. v. 3 2 Cor. iv. 17, v. 5, vii. 10, 11, ix. 11, xii. 12; Phil. ii. 12; Eph. vi. 13; Jas. i. 3.
[h] Acts xvii. 43; Rom. ix. 19.
[i] Lu. i. 6; Acts ix. 31, etc
[k] Mk. vii. 22; Rom. xiii. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 21, etc.
[l] See refs. at ch. ii. 11. [m] Deut. xxi. 30. [n] Rom xiii. 13; Gal. v. 21. [o] Gen. xix. 3, xl. 20. [p] Acts x. 28. [q] 1 Cor. x. 14; Gal. v. 20; Col. iii. 5. [r] Ver. 12; Acts xvii. 20. [s] Ps. xlix. 18. [t] Eph. v. 18; Tit. i. 6; Prov. xxviii. 7. [u] Mat. xxvi. 65, xxvii. 39; Mk. xv. 29; Lu. xxiii. 39; Rom. xiv. 6 · 2 Pet. ii. 2, 10, etc. [v] Lu. xvi. 2; Acts xix. 40; Rom. xiv. 12, etc [w] Acts xxi. 13; 2 Cor xii. 14; Dan. iii. 15. [x] Acts x. 42; Rom. xiv. 9; 2 Tim. iv. 1. [y] Jo. xviii. 37; Rom. xiv. 9, etc. [z] Rom. iii 5; 1 Cor. iii. 3, xv. 32; Gal. i. 11, iii. 15. [a] Ch iii. 18. [b] Rom. viii. 27; 2 Cor. vii. 9; Eph. iv. 24.

[1] *or*, Christ then having suffered [2] *omit* for us
[3] *rather*, as regards the flesh, *or*, fleshly-wise
[4] *rather*, do ye also arm yourselves [5] *or*, purpose [6] *rather*, because
[7] *rather*, as regards the flesh [8] *or rather*, unto sins
[9] to the end no longer to live [10] *literally*, the remaining time
[11] *or*, according to [12] suffices [13] intent, *or*, *as in the R. V.*, desire
[14] *literally*, having walked [15] excesses [16] wine-swillings
[17] drinking-bouts [18] lawless [19] *rather*, at which, *or*, on account of which
[20] *literally*, when, *or*, as [21] effusion, *or perhaps*, sink [22] profligacy
[23] *or*, reviling you [24] to this end [25] as regards

This paragraph brings to an end the series of counsels which began with chap. ii. 11, and have dealt with what is essential to a becoming 'conversation among the Gentiles.' Christian duty in relation to the impurities of heathen associates is now enforced in the strongest terms and with a gleam of gravest irony. Christ's example in suffering is still the key-note. That example, having been already used at length to point the blessedness of suffering for righteousness' sake, is now made the ground for enforcing absolute separation from the vices of paganism,—a separation as absolute as if one were dead to them. The terms in which Peter expresses this resemble, more than anything else in his writings, Paul's method of speaking of the believer as dead, dead with Christ, dead to the law, dead to sin, freed from the law by death as the woman is loosed from the husband's law by the husband's death, freed from sin by becoming dead. The section is not a mere resumption of a statement (that, namely, in iii. 18), which has been lost sight of for a time in another train of reflection. It is the natural continuation of a train of exhortation which has not been broken, but has turned, and still turns, on the necessity of seeing that, if we suffer, it be only for well-doing, not for evil-doing. It contains one great difficulty, the declaration (in ver. 6) about a preaching of the Gospel to them that are dead. That passage has seemed to some interpreters so intractable that they have given it up in despair. Luther imagined that some corruption had crept into its text. Others have been driven to regard it as the gloss of some copyist or annotator. It is undoubtedly akin, however, to the former paragraph in iii. 19, 20, and the results

reached on the one should throw some light on the other.

Ver. 1. **Christ then having suffered as regards the flesh.** The words 'for us,' which the A. V. inserts, have the support of some good authorities. They are wanting, however, in the oldest of all our manuscripts as well as in some important Versions, and are rightly omitted by the R. V. and the best critics. The 'suffered' is a general expression here, covering His death as well as what He endured previous to that. That His death is in view appears from the definition of the 'suffered' by the 'being put to death' in iii. 18. What Peter says here, too, is not exactly '*in* the flesh,' but 'as to the flesh' or 'fleshly-wise.' The term used is precisely the same as in iii. 18. It is introduced twice in this verse, perhaps with this touch of comfort in it, that, as in Christ's case, so in the case of Christians, it is only the perishable side of being that suffering can hurt. The 'then' does not indicate a return from a digression. It carries out to further issues a fact which has formed the ruling idea in all that has been advanced since iii. 7.—**do ye also arm yourselves.** A strong appeal to do on their side what Christ did on His. The course which they have to run is one of conflict. They must have an equipment for their warfare, if they are to wage it worthily, and the armour or equipment which will make them ready is that with which their Captain Himself faced his *curriculum* of suffering. The idea of a spiritual armour, which appears repeatedly in the Pauline Epistles (Rom. xiii. 12; 2 Cor. vi. 7; Eph. vi. 10–17; 1 Thess. v. 8), and meets us also in the Old Testament (*e.g.* Isa. lix. 17), is taken up this once and in briefest possible form in Peter's writings. The verb 'arm yourselves' occurs nowhere again in the New Testament, although it is common enough in Classical Greek, both in the literal sense and in the figurative.—**with the same mind, because he who has suffered as regards the flesh, has ceased from sin.** Although the several parts of this sentence seem intelligible enough, the exact sense of the whole, specially in view of what is immediately connected with it in the next verses, is extremely difficult to determine. Some excellent exegetes have felt a haze overhanging it, which has tempted them to doubt its genuineness. The problem, however, is not to be disposed of in that fashion. The only uncertainties of reading are these—Are we to read '*in* the flesh,' or have we here exactly the same phrase as before, viz. 'as regards the flesh'? And are we to read 'from sin,' as in the A. V. and the text of the R. V., or, as in the margin of the R. V., 'unto sins'? In both cases the balance of evidence seems on the side of the latter supposition. The first question is as to the sense of the word which is rendered 'mind' here. It occurs only once again in the New Testament, and there in the plural, viz. Heb. iv. 12, where it is translated 'intents' in the A. V. and R. V. Its best understood meaning (according to some, indeed, its only meaning) is *thought, consideration, conception.* If this is adhered to, the idea which results may be variously construed. Some take it to be = arm yourselves with the same thought, that is to say, with the thought of having to suffer according to the flesh as Christ suffered, and do so *because* he who has so suffered has ceased from sin (so Huther, etc.). Others (including Calvin, the Genevan, Wiesinger, Mason, etc.) understand the latter words to express the *contents* of the thought, and put it either in the general form = arm yourselves with the same thought, namely, the thought *that* he who has suffered according to the flesh has ceased from sin; or in the more definite form = arm yourselves with the same thought, or conception, of what suffering is, which Christ Himself had when He suffered, namely, that he who has so suffered has ceased from sin. But this disturbs the connection with the opening clause, which speaks not of what Christ or others thought about suffering, but simply of the fact that He suffered. In some of its forms, too, this rendering deals with the very definite phrase 'the *same* thought,' as if it were 'this thought,' or 'this very thought.' The noun in question, however, has another meaning, namely, *disposition, intention,* or *purpose.* This is a rare use. But it seems capable of being made out as an occasional occurrence, both in the Classics (*e.g.* Xen. *Anab.* iii. 1, 13; Plato, *Legg.* 769 E; Eurip. *Hel.* 1026, etc.) and in the Septuagint (Prov. iii. 21, v. 2). Here it gives the clear and congruous idea, that in their conflict Christians were to arm themselves with the same purpose with which their Lord Himself endured suffering. What that purpose in His case was, appears from the previous section. It was to do good to wrong-doers, by bringing them to God.—**because he who has suffered according to the flesh has ceased from sin.** This is added to establish and enforce the counsel. But how it does that is greatly disputed. Some suppose Christ Himself to be the subject of the sentence, and take it to mean that by suffering in the flesh He put an end to sin itself, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; or that He thus made an end of sin-offering. But this introduces dogmatic ideas, which the context does not suggest; while violence is also done to some of the terms. Others suppose it means that Christ, having once suffered, is now done with sin, and is 'fortified against its assaults.' The expression, however, seems to be a general one, stating a principle which is not to be limited to the single case of Christ. Others give the 'suffered' an ethical sense, or a metaphorical, supposing that it refers either to the crucifying of the old man (Calvin, etc.), or to the ideal dying of the believer with Christ in baptism (Schott, etc.). But this is inconsistent with the sense of the same term 'suffered' in the first clause. Some of the best interpreters retain the reading of the Received Text (which admits of being rendered either 'has ceased from sin,' or 'has been made to cease from sin'), and hold that this must be taken in the active sense of a ceasing from *sinning.* So some construe it as = he who suffers on account of his opposition to sin, has broken with sin and shows that its power over him is gone (Weiss). And others, in various ways, understand it to refer to the influence of suffering in subduing sinful inclination and ripening moral character. Even this, however, appears to come short of the almost axiomatic force of the sentence. For it is by no means a general truth that suffering effects cessation from sin. The difficulty will be lightened, however, if we adopt the other reading, 'unto sins.' This gives us a phrase, 'is done with sins,' or 'has been brought to an end as regards sins,' which may fairly express the cessation of a certain *relation* to sin, and pre ent

a parallel to the Pauline formula, 'he that is dead is freed from sin' (Rom. vi. 7). We have then a general proposition, which holds good of both the subjects referred to in the verse, Christ and the Christian, each according to his peculiar relation to sin. And, taking the 'suffered' to cover here, as in iii. 18, the article of death itself, we make the import of the whole this—Christ suffered and died, with the purpose of doing good; confront your sufferings with the same purpose; let them not provoke you to evil-doing, but pledge you to well-doing; be confirmed in this by the consideration that he who has once suffered unto death according to the flesh, is done with sin; Christ thus terminated His relation to sin; and those who suffer and die with Him should recognise their old relation to sin at an end, themselves done with sin.

Ver. 2. **to the end, no longer according to men's lusts but according to God's will, to live the remaining time in the flesh.** Two connections are possible, between which it is difficult to decide. The verse may be attached to the immediately preceding clause, in which case it must be translated, as in the A. V. and the margin of the R. V., 'that *he* should no longer live the rest of *his* time,' etc. In this case it becomes part of the general proposition as to the end put to one's relation to sin by the suffering of death, explaining the moral intention of the change of relation. Or it may be joined with the counsel 'arm yourselves,' the intervening clause being then regarded as a parenthesis. In this case it expresses the practical object they are to have in view in facing their sufferings with the purpose which distinguished Christ; while at the same time it indicates how the general proposition is to be applied to their own case. The 'lusts of men' and the 'will of God' are contrasted as two opposite *services* to which one's life may be dedicated (as in ii. 24 Peter has spoken of living '*unto* righteousness'); or as two opposite *patterns* or *standards* to which one's life may be conformed. The latter idea is more consistent with the longer formula, 'live the remaining time in the flesh;' with which compare i. 17. Analogous phrases occur in Acts xv. 1, 'circumcised *after the manner of* Moses,' and Gal. v. 16, 25, 'Walk *in* the Spirit,' 'live *in* (*i.e. according to*) the Spirit.' This also makes it probable that the 'lusts of men' here are not the lusts of human nature in the readers themselves (or in the man described as suffering), but the lusts indulged by the heathen around the readers. These are an objective standard of life to which they are not to conform. Their standard is to be God's will. Bengel notices the contrast between the 'lusts' which are various, and the 'will of God' which is one. Compare Paul's contrast between the '*works* of the flesh' which are discordant and make life itself a discord, and the '*fruit*' of the Spirit which is a unity, and makes life a unity (Gal. v. 19, 22). Neither of these words here rendered 'remaining' and 'live' occurs elsewhere in the New Testament. The latter, too, is never applied to any order of life lower than the intelligent life of man. The phrase 'in the flesh' means simply 'in the mortal, bodily life.' Peter never uses the word 'flesh' (at least in this Epistle), in the ethical sense which it often has in Paul, as denoting the *sinful* nature of man or the 'principle and realm of earthliness.'

Ver. 3. **For sufficient is the time past to have wrought the will of the Gentiles.** Here the A. V. inserts two phrases, viz. 'of our life' and 'us,' which weight of evidence compels us to omit. According to the best authorities, too, the idea of 'will' is not expressed, as the A. V. leads us to imagine, by the same word as in the previous phrase 'God's will.' Here it might be rendered the 'inclination,' 'intent,' or (with the R. V.) 'desire' of the Gentiles. The verb 'wrought' is of a form and a tense, which serve to throw the action entirely into the past as now finally done with. The adjective 'sufficient' occurs only twice again in the New Testament, viz. in Matt. vi. 34 ('*sufficient* unto the day is the evil thereof'), and x. 25 ('it is *enough* for the disciple that he be as his Master'). It is here the note of pained feeling uttering itself in irony. The sentence is an example of what grammarians call *litotes*, less than the reality being said in order to suggest the more. '*The past may suffice;* there is a figure in that, meaning much more than the words express: *It is enough!* Oh! *too much*, to have so long, so miserable a life' (Leighton). The allusion to the 'desire of the *Gentiles*' (which is practically equivalent here to the desire of the *heathen*), especially as that desire or intent is interpreted by the following catalogue of sins, suits Christians who had been heathen, rather than Christians who had been Jews.—**walking**, or rather, as the perfect tense implies, **walking as ye have done**; in reference to a continuous course of life now done with. The A. V., following the readings which we have seen cause to reject, makes it 'when *we* walked,' as if Peter courteously included himself in the description, in order to soften its edge.—**in excesses**; not, as both the A. V. and the R. V. render it, **in lasciviousness**. No doubt uncleanness is the foremost thing in view in these excesses (cp. Rom. xiii. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 21; Gal. v. 19). But Peter begins with a wide, plural term, sufficient to include unbridled conduct of all kinds, and then goes on from the general to the particular. — **lusts**; pointing specially to *fleshly* lusts and appetites strictly so called, although the term is not confined to these (see on i. 14).—**wine-swillings**. The word is of rare occurrence even in the Classics. In the New Testament this is its solitary occurrence. The cognate verb, however, is used in the Greek Version of Deut. xxi. 20, in the sense of being a *drunkard*. The noun denotes both the thirst for drink and indulgence in drink. Here it is in the plural, and means 'debauches,' or, as the R. V. renders it, 'wine-bibbings.'—**revellings**. Wycliffe strangely renders it, 'immeasurable eatings;' Tyndale, 'eating;' and Cranmer, 'excess of eating.' The term occurs again only in Rom. xiii. 13; Gal. v. 21. It is the word which is so familiar to us in the Classics as the name given to the drunken merry-makings of various kinds, which were so considerable an element in Greek life. They were recognised entertainments, celebrated on festal days, in connection with the worship of Bacchus and other gods, or in honour of the victors at the national games. Those of the last-named class were of a comparatively orderly kind. The others were attended with great licence, and generally ended in the revellers sallying out into the streets, and wakening the echoes with song and dance and noisy frolic.—**carousings**. Another word of which this is the

only New Testament instance. It means social *drinking-bouts* or *roysterings*, rather than merely 'banquetings,' as the A. V. makes it.—**and lawless idolatries.** Here, as so often elsewhere, idolatry and immorality are associated as going hand in hand with each other. The 'abominable' of the A. V. and R. V. scarcely conveys the point of the adjective. It describes the idolatries as *unlawful*, outside the pale of Divine law. In the only other passage of the New Testament in which it occurs (Acts x. 28) it expresses the idea that fellowship between a Jew and a man of another nation was contrary to Jewish law. This mention of 'idolatries' as the last and worst of the things after which the 'desire of the Gentiles' ran, clearly indicates the Gentile extraction of Peter's readers. From the time of the captivity idolatry was the sin which the Jew specially forswore. It could not with any semblance of justice be spoken of as a characteristic Jewish vice in Peter's day. The passage in Rom. ii. 22, which is often cited in support of the opposite view, deals with an entirely different matter,—the inconsistency on the part of one who professes to hate idolatry and yet commits sacrilege.

Ver. 4. **on which account they think it strange that ye run not with them into the same effusion** (or, **slough**) **of profligacy, speaking evil of you.** The 'wherein' of the A. V. (which the R. V. also retains) is so far misleading, as it naturally means to the English reader 'in which *vices*.' The sense, however, is not = they think it strange that ye run not with them in their vices into the same slough, etc. The construction of the sentence, which is somewhat dubious, may be put either thus,—'at which matter they are astonished, namely, the matter of your not running with them,' etc.; or thus,—'at which state of affairs they are astonished, seeing that you do not run with them,' etc.; or best, perhaps, thus,—'on which account (*i.e.* on account of the fact that ye did once walk in these excesses) they are astonished when ye do not now run with them,' etc. The several terms are remarkable for their force and vividness. The first verb, which occurs repeatedly in the N. T., with its primary sense of 'receive a stranger,' 'lodge,' etc. (Acts x. 23, xxviii. 7; Heb. xiii. 2), has here the secondary sense of 'counting strange' or 'being astonished,' which it has also in ver. 12, and in Acts xvii. 20. The second (comp. also Mark vi. 33; Acts iii. 11) conveys the idea of eager companionship in running. The noun rendered 'excess' by the A. V., and the text of R. V., is not found elsewhere in the N. T. In the Classics, where also it is of very rare occurrence, it seems to mean primarily *effusion* or *outpouring*, and secondarily an *estuary*. Different senses are proposed for it here, some preferring the local sense of 'sink,' 'slough,' 'puddle' (Alford, Fronmüller, etc.); others that of 'stream' (Schott, etc.), or 'flood' (margin of R. V.); others the more general sense of 'overflowing' (Huther, Hofmann); others again the sense of 'softness' (Gerard) or 'wantonness' (de Wette). The old Greek lexicographers explain it as = 'slackness,' 'looseness,' etc. The other noun, rendered 'riot' by the A. V. and R. V., means rather *dissoluteness* or *lewdness*. In Greek ethics it denotes the prodigal squandering of one's means, and then a profligate, dissolute mode of life, the two ideas of wasteful expenditure and expenditure on one's appetites being near akin. It occurs again in Eph. v. 18 (A. V. 'excess'), and in Tit. i. 6 (A. V. 'riot'). The adverb is found once, viz. Luke xv. 13, in the phrase 'with riotous living.'—**speaking evil of you,** *i.e.* slandering, reviling you. It is the term which, when used of God, is rendered *blaspheme*. With what power do these few bold strokes depict the rush of the mass of the heathen over all barriers that stand in the way of vicious indulgence, and their haste to drag others with them on to the same goal of a life of appetite! Wordsworth thinks the point of the comparison is the idea of 'foul streams flowing together into one and the same sink;' a metaphor which he considers peculiarly expressive 'in countries where after violent rains the gutters are suddenly swollen, and pour their contents together with violence into a common sewer.' With this N. T. picture of the banded troops of the Gentiles 'rushing together in a filthy confluence for reckless indulgence and effusion in sin,' compare such pictures in the polite literature of the heathen as that which Ovid draws of the Bacchic orgies (*Met.* iii. 529, etc.; see also Dr. John Brown, *in loc.*).

Ver. 5. **Who shall give account;** the same phrase as in Heb. xiii. 17, Acts xix. 40, and found on Christ's own lips, *e.g.* Matt. xii. 36; Luke xvi. 2.—**to him that is ready to judge.** The formula 'ready to' (which is used again only in Acts xxi. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 14), along with the tense in which the 'to judge' is cast, points to the last judgment as certain and near, and to the Judge as prepared to judge once for all. This Judge, too, as we may infer from the general conclusion to which chap. iii. 17–22 led up, is Christ,—the Christ who is reviled when Christians are reviled, the Christ who, in the time of His own suffering, committed His case to Him that judgeth righteously.—**the quick and the dead,** or simply, *quick and dead*. Here, as in a good many passages of Scripture (*e.g.* Lev. xiii. 10; Num. xvi. 30; Ps. lv. 15, cxxiv. 3; Acts x. 42; 2 Tim. iv. 1; Heb. iv. 12), the adjective 'quick' has its ancient sense of 'living,' which is now for the most part lost. Compare Shakespeare's

> 'I had rather be set quick i' the earth.'
> *Merry Wives*, iii. 4, 90,

and the still current 'cut to the *quick*,' 'quickset,' 'quicksilver,' etc. The universality and impartiality of the judgment are thus expressed. For the phrase 'quick and dead' is not to be limited either to the heathen slanderers, or (with Schott) to the Christians who are to get their rights, whether alive or dead, at Christ's coming. It is for the comfort of suffering believers to know that there is a judgment in waiting for their revilers, and that this judgment is in the hands of Him who will impartially give their rights to all, whether alive or dead, whether heathen or Christian.

Ver. 6. **For to this end was the gospel preached also to the dead, in order that they might be judged indeed according to men as regards the flesh, but live according to God as regards the spirit.** There is much difference of opinion as to the sense of individual terms in this obscure passage. The main points in dispute, however, are the *time*, *scene*, and *subjects* of this preaching. The *preaching* itself can be understood only as an offer of grace. It is expressed by the well-known verb which always means to 'bring good news,' to 'publish the Gospel,' etc.

Does the passage, then, speak of an offer of grace made to men after they have entered the world of the dead? Many of the most influential interpreters of the present day hold strongly that it does. Not a few affirm that only dogmatic prepossession can account for the contrary opinion. It must be admitted that the prevalent view fairly meets some of the most pressing requirements of the exegesis, and that it establishes an easy connection with the preceding verse. For the whole statement then takes this form—'Christ is ready to judge quick and dead; and with justice shall the dead, no less than the living, be judged by Him; for His Gospel is preached to all,—in the other world, if not in this.' This interpretation, nevertheless, is burdened with very serious difficulties. Either this preaching in Hades is identified with the preaching mentioned in iii. 19; in which case it is open to the objections already taken to the theory of a presentation of the Gospel, by the disembodied or quickened Redeemer, to the souls of the disobedient of Noah's time in Hades. Or it is supposed that Peter now states the general truth, of which that was only a particular illustration, namely, that, through Christ's visit to Hades, the Gospel is proclaimed to all, and that upon this basis Christ can righteously judge all, whether dead or living. But there are various considerations which tell against this reading of the verse. It does injustice, for example, to the *time* to which the preaching is referred. It disposes of the historical tense 'was preached' as if it were 'is preached,' or 'shall be preached,' and of a Gospel ministry which is distinctly described as past, as if it were a continuous process. It involves the assumptions that the term 'dead' must mean *all* the dead, and that what is given as the statement of an already accomplished fact is the statement of a general principle. It overlooks the circumstance that the act of being 'judged according to men' is represented as *subsequent* to the preaching. It introduces an irrelevant idea, when it introduces the idea of its being a righteous thing that all men should be judged by Christ because, in the other world, if not in this, the Gospel shall first have been preached to all. For Peter is not dealing with any such question as to how it shall stand with those who have not heard the Gospel in this world, but with a plain case where the Gospel is known,—the case where Christians are slandered by their heathen neighbours for their fidelity to the Gospel. It is difficult, too, to see how the idea in question bears upon the exhortation which Peter is pointing. How should the mention of a Gospel preached to the dead in the under world bear upon the position of living Christians who are misrepresented by living detractors in the upper world? What encouragement to patient endurance of heathen slander should Christians find in the information that their heathen persecutors are assured of a new period of favour in the other world? Or how should the mention of Christ's graciousness towards the unrighteous dead incite the righteous living to a persevering separation from heathen impurity? These considerations, and others of like kind, render this popular view of the passage very doubtful indeed. On the other hand, it must be frankly confessed that it is far from easy to make out an entirely satisfactory interpretation. All would run smoothly, indeed, if we could follow Augustine in taking the 'dead' here in the sense of the *spiritually* dead. But, in spite of the twofold use of the term by our Lord Himself in the saying, 'Let the dead bury their dead' (Matt. viii. 22), it is impossible to give it a different meaning in ver. 6 from what it has in ver. 5. The use of the word 'judge' in the one clause, is also the natural key to its use in the other. This makes it unlikely that Peter's 'judged according to men' is parallel in sense to Paul's 'delivering men to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus' (1 Cor. v. 5), and 'when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world' (1 Cor. xi. 32). It is generally agreed, therefore, that the *judgment* spoken of must mean more than either the *mortification* of the flesh, or the *chastening* of God, and that what is referred to is physical death as the penalty of sin, the judgment from which none, not even the saved, are exempt. Subjection to this judgment, however, merely qualifies the proper object of the preaching. The two things have something like this relation to each other—'in order that, though once judged indeed, as other men are, as regards the flesh, they might, as regards the spirit, have an enduring life such as God lives.' The terms 'in the flesh,' 'in the spirit,' are used here as in iii. 19. Taking all this together we have to choose between two interpretations, of which the one regards the heathen, the other the Christians, as the parties first in view. On the former interpretation the argument becomes this—'Be not disturbed or led astray by your revilers; they have their account to give to Christ Himself, all of them, whether they be dead or living when He comes; for the object with which the Gospel was preached to those now departed, as it is preached to those now living, was to lead them to the life of God; and if they frustrate this object, it will only make their condemnation surer.' On the latter it amounts to this,—'Have done for ever with the vile, pagan life; the heathen will persecute you, and justify their persecutions by reviling your character; be not moved by that. Christ is Judge, and the cause of all is safe with Him, of those who die, not less than of those who survive. Your brethren who have died have their case, nevertheless, secure with Him; for the very object with which the Gospel was preached to them was that, though in their bodies they met the doom of death which is common to men, yet in their spirits they should have a life like God's; and, should you have to suffer even unto death, it will be with you as it is with them.' This latter interpretation is on the whole to be preferred. It fits in with the idea of the previous verse and the counsels of the whole section. It does justice to the prominence given to this 'life according to God in the spirit' as the great aim of the Gospel. It also points to feelings which (as we gather from Rom. viii. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 13–18, etc.) were apt to disquiet the first converts, kindling as they did with the prospect of Christ's speedy return,—namely, the perplexity caused by the non-exemption of Christians from death, 'the wages of sin,' and the fear that those who died before Christ's coming should somehow suffer loss.

CHAPTER IV. 7–11.

Personal and relative Duties of Christians in view of the End.

7 BUT the [a] end of all things is [b] at hand: be ye therefore
8 [c] sober,[1] and [d] watch[2] [e] unto prayer.[3] And,[4] [f] above all
things,[5] have [g] fervent charity among yourselves: [6] for [r] charity [6]
9 shall [h] cover [9] the [10] [i] multitude of sins. Use [k] hospitality [11] one
10 to another without [l] grudging.[12] As every man hath received
the [m] gift,[13] *even so* [n] minister [14] the same one to another, as
11 [o] good [p] stewards of the [q] manifold grace of God. If any man
speak, *let him speak* as the [r] oracles of God;[15] if any man
[s] minister, *let him do it* as of the [t] ability which God [u] giveth:[16]
that God [v] in all things may be [w] glorified [17] through Jesus
Christ; to whom be [x] praise and [y] dominion [18] for ever and
ever.[19] Amen.

[a] Mat. xxiv. 6, 14; 1 Cor. xv. 24, etc.
[b] Mat iii. 2; Rom. xiii. 12; Heb. x. 25; Jas. v. 8, etc.
[c] Mk. v. 15; Lu. viii. 35; Rom. xii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 13; Tit. ii. 6.
[d] Ch. i. 13, v. 8; 1 Thes. v. 6, 8; 2 Tim. iv. 5
[e] Eph. vi. 18.
[f] Jas. v. 12.
[g] Ch. i. 13.
[h] Jas. v. 20; Prov. x. 12.
[i] Ezek. xxviii. 18.
[k] 1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 8. Cf. also Heb xiii. 2, etc.
[l] Jo. vii. 12; Acts vi. 1; Phil. ii. 14; Ex. xvi. 7, 9.
[m] Rom. i. 11, xii. 6; 1 Cor. i. 7, etc.
[n] See refs. at ch. i. 12.
[o] Jo. x. 11; 1 Tim. iv. 6; 2 Tim. ii. 3.
[p] 1 Cor. iv. 1; Tit. i 7.
[q] See refs. at ch. i. 6.
[r] Acts vii. 38; Rom. iii. 2; Heb. v. 12; Isa. v. 24.
[s] 1 Tim. iii. 10, 13, and refs. at ch. i. 12.
[t] Mk. xii. 30, 33.
[u] 2 Cor. ix. 10; 2 Kings iv. 7; also 2 Pet. i. 5, 11; Gal. iii. 5; Col. ii. 19.
[v] 1 Tim. iii. 12.
[w] Ver. 16; Lu. v. 25, 26; Acts iv. 10; Gal. i. 24, etc.
[x] Lu. ii. 14, xviii. 18; Jo. ix. 24; Acts xiii. 33; Rom. xvi. 27; Jude 25, etc.
[y] Ch. v. 11; 1 Tim. vi. 16; Jude 25; Rev. i. 6, v. 13.

[1] *or*, sound-minded
[2] *rather, as the R. V. puts it*, sober
[3] *literally*, prayers
[4] *omit* And
[5] before all things
[6] having your love one to another intense
[7] because
[8] love
[9] *read rather*, covers
[10] a
[11] *rather simply*, hospitable
[12] *or*, murmuring
[13] Even as each man received a gift
[14] ministering
[15] *or*, if any man speaketh, as oracles of God
[16] *or*, if any man ministereth, as of the strength which God supplies
[17] that in all things God may be glorified
[18] to whom is the glory and the might
[19] unto the ages of the ages

The thought of Christ's readiness to judge both quick and dead leads naturally to that of the close of the world. Peter passes thus to a new series of counsels bearing on what befits men who see the Judge approaching and the end at hand. While the former exhortations dealt mainly with the external relations of believers, these are occupied with the life within the Church itself. They fall into three series, all more or less influenced by the idea of the trials which the present order of things brings with it to Christians. In the first series certain personal and social duties are stated, which affect the inner life of the Church, and become urgent in view of the rapidly advancing end.

Ver. 7. **But the end of all things is at hand.** This indicates another turning-point in the Epistle. The subjects which are now introduced, however, are not unconnected with the previous section. The 'end' is the new view-point from which they are offered to the eye, but the graces themselves are such as relate specially to what Christians should be in face of temptations to heathen vice and under the burden of heathen persecution. In speaking of the 'end,' Peter refers neither to the mere destruction of Jerusalem, nor to the end of the lives of individuals, but to the termination which awaits the present system of things as a whole when Christ returns. The death of the individual believer has a very secondary place in apostolic teaching. The event with which the New Testament is accustomed to fill the Christian's vision of the future, and which it proposes as a supreme motive to a circumspect walk, is an event of universal, not of merely personal, importance — that Second Coming of Christ which is to put an end to the present world itself. This 'end,' too, is 'at hand'—a rendering which occurs again in Rom. xiii. 12, Phil. iv. 5, and better conveys the impending imminence of the event than the 'draweth near' or 'draweth nigh,' which appears elsewhere (Luke xxi. 8; Jas. v. 8). The same expressive term is applied to the advent of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. iii. 2, iv. 17, x. 7; Mark i. 15; Luke x. 4), to the approach of the traitor and the 'hour' of the Son of man (Matt. xxvi. 45, 46), to the entrance of the 'day' (Rom. xiii. 12), etc. This vivid realization of the nearness of the end, which appears in all the apostolic writings, is specially characteristic of Peter. To all the New Testament writers, but perhaps specially to him, and his comrade John, their own time was the 'last time,' the dispensation beyond which there was to be no other, and the

close of which was so near that nothing seemed to stand between them and it. Yet the chronology of the 'end,' as Christ Himself had taught them (Acts i. 7), was not disclosed to them, and there were things which they knew must intervene before that time (2 Thess. ii. 3, 7). 'This principle is to be held fast,' says Calvin, 'that ever since Christ first appeared, nothing is left to believers but with minds in suspense to be always intent upon His Second Advent.'—**be therefore sound-minded.** The word here rendered 'sober' by the A. V., after Cranmer and the Genevan (Wycliffe gives 'prudent,' Tyndale 'discreet,' the Rhemish 'wise'), means literally 'sound-minded,' and is so used in the description of the healed demoniac as 'in his right mind' (Mark v. 15; Luke viii. 35). Then it comes to mean *sober-minded*, *discreet*, *self-controlled*. It points to what Jeremy Taylor calls 'reason's girdle and passion's bridle,' the healthy self-restraint which keeps the curb on appetite, extravagance, and all intemperate feeling or action. Its cognates occur almost exclusively in the Pastoral Epistles. The noun itself is found only thrice in the New Testament,—in Acts xxvi. 25 (of Paul's 'words of truth and *soberness*'); 1 Tim. ii. 9, where 'shamefastness' and 'sobriety' are coupled, the former denoting the 'innate shrinking from anything unbecoming,' the latter the 'well-balanced state of mind resulting from habitual self-control' (Ellicott); and 1 Tim. ii. 15, where it is the fence of 'charity and holiness.' In the Classical ethics it was opposed to licentiousness and excess, and was defined by Socrates as the 'foundation of manly virtue.'—**and sober.** This is an idea nearly akin to the former, though perhaps more limited. It is better translated 'be sober' than 'watch.' Only in two out of the six New Testament occurrences of the verb does the A. V. depart from the rendering 'sober' (here and in 2 Tim. iv. 5). The primary sense is that of freedom from drunkenness. The secondary sense is that of *wariness*, and thus in the New Testament it comes to have a much larger meaning than that of the mere denial of gross appetite. It is more than doubtful, however, whether it ever means *vigilance* in the sense of *wakefulness*. See also on i. 13.—**unto prayers.** The true reading here is neither 'prayer,' nor 'the prayers' (as if the social prayers of the Church were exclusively in view), but 'unto prayers.' Prayer of all kinds, therefore, whether private or public, personal or social, seems to be in view. This is the end to which the cultivation of the previous graces should look, the great interest which it should advance. Soundness of mind and sobriety are essential to the prayerful frame, and specially so where the believer suffers from the contagion of vicious surroundings and the distraction of trial. Tyndale's rendering, therefore, expresses the point most happily, 'Be ye, therefore, discreet and sober, that ye may be apt to prayers.' The prayerfulness which sustains the believer under heathen revilings, and brings health to the life of the Church itself, must be fed by a mind lifted above the agitations of passion and fear. This circumspect walk, too, in which self is ever under control and prayer ever in view, —not fanatical excitement or retreat from duty,— is what should be fostered by the thought of the imminence of the end.

Ver. 8. **Before all things having your love one to another intense.** The 'and' of the A. V. is cancelled by the R. V. and the best authorities. This exhortation and the following are put in the participial form, as being immediately connected with the broad counsels of ver. 7. The preference which is given to brotherly love is not given as if it were superior to prayer and the other virtues, or as if these were to be subordinated to the interests of that, but because without it nothing else can make the inner life of the Church what it should be. Neither is it brotherly love in itself that is enjoined (for that is taken for granted), but the duty of giving it fullest scope. It is to be cultivated with 'persevering intensity' (Huther), as the disposition to which the soul without risk can surrender itself entirely, and which, the more it is cherished, adds new grace to sobriety and the other virtues, and deepens the life of the Church. On the 'fervent' of the A. V. see i. 22.—**because love covereth a multitude of sins.** A reason for the pre-eminence assigned to unreserved brotherly love. The reason is found in what love does, now and naturally, within the Church. The better reading is the present 'covereth,' not the future 'shall cover.' The sentence recalls the similar statement in Prov. x. 12. Although Peter's version varies somewhat from it (*e.g.* in introducing a 'multitude' for 'all,' using a different term for 'sin,' etc.), it is plain that he has the Old Testament statement in his mind, whether he is quoting directly from the Book of Proverbs or using what had come to be a current saying. The parallelism in which it is set with 'hatred' makes its point quite clear. It is that love works for concord, throwing a covering over sins, forgiving them, excusing them, making as little of them as possible, while the genius of hatred is the opposite.—'*Hatred stirs strife*, aggravates and makes the worst of all, but *love covers a multitude of sins:* it delights not in undue disclosing of brethren's failings, doth not eye them rigidly, nor expose them willingly to the eyes of others' (Leighton). This also is Peter's idea. What he has in view is the influence of love upon the life of the Church. He speaks of it, therefore, as being of the nature to act as Paul describes it in his great hymn of charity, when he says it 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things' (1 Cor. xiii. 7). Thus the sins referred to are our neighbour's sins, and the covering meant is the veil of charity. The passage says nothing of the effect of love on ourselves. Far less does it lend any countenance to the Roman Catholic notion of a justification on the ground of a faith informed and animated by love. Neither is Peter's meaning quite the same as that of James. The latter, also, makes use of this proverb (v. 20), in illustration of what love is in relation to the sins of others. But the case which he has in view is that of the erring brother, and the covering of sins is that which love effects when it seeks and secures the brother's reclamation.

Ver. 9. **hospitable one to another without murmuring.** The duty of hospitality occupies a very notable place in the New Testament teaching, in respect both of private Christians and of those in office (cf. *e.g.* Rom. xii. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 2, v. 10; Tit. i. 8; Heb. xiii. 2; 3 John 5-8, etc.). The characteristic Eastern virtue became of still more urgent importance among Christians in the early times of their uncertainty and trial, when

families were broken up, friends divided, and homeless wanderings made a necessity. Taking it for granted, however, that the laws of hospitality are honoured, and that believers who have the power will be ready to open the door to every needy brother, Peter deals here with the spirit in which all should be done. It should be 'without grudging,' or rather (as the Rhemish Version and the Revised render it; while the A. V. has the support of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan), 'without murmuring,' that is, without giving vent to hard or selfish thoughts about the cost and trouble. The word (which is strange to Classical Greek) occurs again in John vii. 12, Acts vi. 1, Phil. ii. 14, in all which cases the A. V. renders it *murmuring*. Only when hospitality is offered in this spirit does it answer to the high strain of love which should prevail among Christian brethren.

Ver. 10. **Even as each man received a gift, ministering the same one to another.** The possession of gifts being taken for granted, the love which pledges all to open-hearted hospitality, pledges each also to use his gift for the good of others. The 'gift' is to be understood generally, —not of official gifts merely, but (as in Rom. xii. 6; 1 Cor. xii. 4, 28) of spiritual gifts of all kinds. The receipt of the gift is represented as having taken place at a definite period in the past—'received,' not 'hath received' as the R. V. puts it. It is not explained, however, whether the period referred to is the time of one's first entrance into the truth, or the time of baptism, or that of the laying on of hands, in connection with which the special spiritual gifts of the Apostolic Age seem usually to have been communicated (comp. Acts iii. 28, viii. 18–20, xix. 5, 6; 1 Tim. iv. 14). The law of love is to be fulfilled by 'ministering' (on which word see chap. i. 12) what is so received. The gift is not to be 'rendered unfruitful through neglect, or perverted to the purposes of a selfish ostentation' (Lillie), but is to be used as a store at the service of the Church's need. And 'even as' it was received, so is it to be ministered. This 'even as' is understood by some to refer to the spirit of the ministering; in which case it would mean that as the gift was freely bestowed, so it should be freely and ungrudgingly used. Others think it implies that the gift was to be used according to the intention of its bestowal. The point, however, seems to be that the recipients of spiritual gifts should serve the Church each according to the *measure* of what he had received, or (and this seems more consistent with such parallel statements as Rom. xii. 3–8; Eph. iv. 7) each according to the *kind* of gift received.—**as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.** The character belonging to believers as the possessors of gifts is hereby added. They are stewards, not owners, of what they have, and they are to use it as 'good,' that is, *honourable*, stewards, against whom there shall be no reproach. What is virtually entrusted to their keeping is the 'grace' of God itself, from which all their particular 'gifts' are derived. In reference to the variety of gifts that grace is fitly termed 'manifold'—on which see chap. i. 6. It is possible that Peter's mind goes back here upon his Lord's parables of the Talents and the Unjust Steward (Matt. xxvi.; Luke xvi.).

Ver. 11. **If any man speaketh, as oracles of God.** The words cover all the various gifts of speech,—prophesying, teaching, exhorting, etc., which were known in the Church, whether official or non-official. They are enumerated in Rom. xii. 6–8, and 1 Cor. xii. 8, 28. Such gifts are a part of the stewardship. They who speak in the Church are to do so, therefore, as 'oracles of God.' The term 'oracles,' which in the Classics means oracular responses, is used in the New Testament to designate Divine utterances or revelations, specially those of the Old Testament (Acts vii. 38; Rom. iii. 2). Once it is applied to those of the New Testament itself, viz. in Heb. v. 12, where it seems to denote the Divine testimony to Christ, or Christian doctrine as derived from revelation. It is not meant here, however, merely that those who spoke should see that what they said was accordant with Scripture or the Word of God, but that they should speak as if they themselves were oracles of God, utterers not of thoughts of their own, but of thoughts which they owe to Him.—**if any man ministereth.** This gift, too, is not to be limited to the official ministry of the deacon. It includes all those kinds of service, in relation to the poor, the sick, strangers, etc., which are associated with the gifts of teaching in such passages as Rom. xii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28. Nothing more distinguished the primitive Church than its self-denying, enthusiastic attention to such interests. Tertullian of Carthage (A.D. 160–240) speaks of it as one of the chief felicities of marriages in Christ, that the wife was free to care for the sick and distribute her charities without hindrance, and as one of the greatest disadvantages of mixed marriages that the Christian wife was not allowed by the heathen husband to visit the house of the stranger, the hovel of the poor, the dungeon of the prisoner. (See Neander, *Ch. Hist.* i. 354, Bohn.) Such gifts, however, were to be used **as of the strength which God supplies,** that is, with the faithfulness of stewards, and with the humility befitting men who were conscious that they drew not from stores of their own, but from what God Himself furnished. The term, which the A. V. renders 'giveth,' is the one which in Classical Greek expressed the munificent act of the citizen who undertook to bear the heavy expense of supplying the chorus for one of the great dramatic representations. It then came to be applied, as here, to other kinds of liberal ministering or furnishing.—**in order that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.** The object is finally added which the possessors of gifts are to set before them, and with a view to which they are to use these various gifts in the spirit already enjoined. It is that not they, but God Himself, may have the glory. God will be honoured 'in all things,' *i.e.* specially in all the gifts and ministries within the Church, just as Christian stewards recognise that all these things come to the Church from God through Christ, and are therefore to be rendered to God again through Christ in the form of service to His Church.—**to whom is the glory and the dominion unto the ages of the ages. Amen.** The form of this sentence, and the addition of the 'Amen,' lead some to suppose that Peter repeats here some familiar liturgical formula, perhaps one of those in use in the Jewish services. Whether that is the case or not, we have the same doxology in Rev. i. 6, and there it is applied to Christ. Here, however, most interpreters rightly recognise God, who is the principal subject of the whole sentence

as also the subject of the doxology. The 'glory' of the R. V. is a better rendering than the 'praise' of the A. V., as the term answers to the former 'glorified.' The idea of the *everlasting* is expressed according to the Hebrew conception of eternity as the measureless succession of cycles of time. If the whole is taken in the form 'whose is' or 'to whom is,' rather than 'to whom be,' the sentence is introduced not as a mere ascription of praise, but as giving the reason why the glorifying of God should be the great object of the exercise of gifts. God is to be glorified in all things, because the glory in all belongs to Him, and it is the Church's honour to realize this.

CHAPTER IV. 12–19.

Renewed Counsels on the Endurance of Suffering, specially in view of the End.

12 [a] BELOVED, [b] think it not strange concerning the [c] fiery trial[1] which is to [d] try you,[2] as though some[3] [e] strange
13 thing [f] happened unto you: but rejoice, [g] inasmuch[4] as ye are [h] partakers of[5] Christ's [i] sufferings; that,[6] when his glory shall
14 be [k] revealed,[7] ye may be glad also with [l] exceeding joy.[8] If ye be[9] [m] reproached for the [n] name of Christ, [o] happy *are ye;* for the Spirit of glory and of God [p] resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.[10]
15 But[11] let none of you [q] suffer as a [r] murderer, or *as*[12] a thief, or *as*[12] an [s] evil-doer, or *as* a busybody in other men's matters.
16 Yet[13] if *any man suffer*[14] as a [t] Christian, let him not be
17 [u] ashamed; but let him [v] glorify God on this behalf.[15] For the time *is come*[16] that [w] judgment must begin at the [x] house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the [y] end *be* of them
18 that [z] obey not the [a] gospel of God? And if the righteous [b] scarcely[17] [c] be[18] saved, where shall the [d] ungodly and the
19 sinner appear?[19] Wherefore let them[20] that suffer [e] according to the will of God [f] commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well-doing, as unto a [g] faithful Creator.[21]

[a] See refs. at ch. ii. 11.
[b] See refs. at ver. 4.
[c] Prov. xxvii. 21; Rev. xviii. 9, 18.
[d] Lu. iv. 13; 1 Tim. vi. 9, and refs. at ch. i. 6.
[e] Acts xvii. 18; Heb. xiii. 9.
[f] Acts iii. 10, xx. 9; 1 Cor. x. 11; 2 Pet. ii. 22.
[g] Rom. viii. 26; 2 Cor. viii. 12.
[h] Rom. xii. 13; Gal. vi. 6; Phil. iv. 15.
[i] Ch. i. 11.
[k] See refs. at ch. i. 7.
[l] See refs. at ch i. 6.
[m] Mat. v. 11, etc.
[n] Mk. ix. 41; and also Rev. iii. 1.
[o] Mat. v. 2, etc.
[p] Isa. xi. 2. Cf. also Lu. x. 6; Acts iv. 33; Rom. iii. 22.

[q] Ch. iii. 18. [r] Mat. xxii. 7; Acts iii. 14, vii. 52, xxviii. 4; Rev. xxi. 8, xxii. 15. [s] See refs. at ch. ii. 12. [t] Acts xi. 26, xxvi. 28. [u] Rom. i. 16; 2 Cor. x. 8; 2 Tim. i. 8, 12. [v] Acts xxiv. 25; Heb. vi. 2; Rev. xx. 4; Prov. xxi. 15, etc. [w] 1 Tim. iii. 15; Heb. x. 21. [x] Phil. iii. 19; Heb. vi. 8, etc. [y] See refs. at ch. ii. 7. [z] Mk. i. 14; Rom. i. 1, xv. 16; 2 Cor. xi. 7; 1 Thes. ii. 2, 8, 9, etc. [a] Acts xiv. 18, xxvii. 7, 8, 16; Rom. v. 7. [b] Ch. iii. 21; and Acts ii. 47; 1 Cor. xv. 2. [c] Rom. iv. 5, 6; 1 Tim. i. 9; 2 Pet. ii. 5, iii. 7; Jude 4, 15. [d] Ch. iii. 17, 18. [e] Lu. xxiii. 46; Ps. xxx. 5; also Acts xiv. 23, xx. 32. [f] 1 Cor. i. 9, x. 13; 2 Cor. i. 18; 1 Thes. v. 24; 2 Thes. iii. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 13, etc.

[1] *literally*, burning [2] *rather*, which comes upon you with a view to probation [3] a [4] in as far as, *or*, in proportion as [5] *or*, share in [6] *rather*, in order that also [7] *or*, in the revelation of His glory [8] *literally*, ye may rejoice, exulting [9] are [10] *omit the clause*, on their part . . . glorified [11] For [12] *omit* as [13] But [14] suffers [15] *rather*, in this name [16] For it is the season that the judgment begins [17] *or*, with difficulty [18] is [19] the ungodly and sinner—where shall he appear [20] *insert* also [21] commit their souls to a faithful Creator in well-doing

In this second series of exhortations to Christian duty as that is affected by the prospect of the end, Peter takes up again the case of persecution which he has touched on more than once already. The present statement, however, is neither a simple reiteration of former statements, nor a mere interlude. It gathers into a focus various things which have been previously said on the subject of suffering, particularly at the hand of the slanderous and persecuting heathen (i. 6, 7, ii. 19–21, iii. 16, 17, iv. 1–4). It offers at the same time a still deeper insight into what tribulation endured for

Christ's sake means, and gives additional reasons for regarding it neither as a perplexity nor as loss, but as a discipline which is both intelligible and honourable now, and which will yield a priceless return when Christ reappears. The truths, therefore, now brought under the eye of those threatened Christians are such as these—that the trials of the righteous come only by God's will, that their object is the probation of faith, that they bring with them the honour of fellowship with the suffering Lord, and that they are the earnest and measure of a glory yet to be revealed. But if they have the promise of such blessedness, it is, as Peter urges again in the most pointed terms, only if indeed they are not induced by our own fault, but borne simply for righteousness' sake.

Ver. 12. **Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial.** So far the translation of the A. V. is a very happy one. The same verb is used here as in ver. 4 (which see), and with the same sense. The affectionate address, 'Beloved,' which has been used already at a serious turning-point in the Epistle, is repeated here in token of the writer's sympathy with the readers, and to conciliate their attention to what he has yet to say on a painful subject. What he says first of all is to deprecate their looking on their trials as things beyond understanding or expectation. The heathen thought it strange that Christians adopted a manner of life so different from what prevailed. And they were wrong in so thinking. Christians themselves were equally wrong in yielding to the sense of mere bewilderment at their persecutions, however strange it might seem at first that they, who were taught to regard themselves as God's elect ones and His heirs, should be left to suffer as they did at the hand of His enemies. The trial itself is expressed by a term which is well represented by the 'fiery trial' of the A. V. In the Classics it means a *burning*, or a *firing*, and is used of the material processes of cooking, roasting, etc., but also at times metaphorically of *burning desire*, *proving by fire*, etc. In Prov. xxvii. 21 it is rendered 'furnace,' and the cognate verb is used of the trial of character as being like the smelting of metals (cf. Ps. lxv. 10; Zech. xiii. 9). The only other passages of the N. T. in which the noun occurs are Rev. xviii. 9, 18, where it is rendered 'burning.' This 'burning' is said to be among you,—a clause which is overlooked by the A. V., and which represents the fiery process as not remote but already at work in their midst. —**which comes upon you with a view to probation** (or, as the R. V. paraphrases it, *to prove you*). The 'which is to try you' of the A. V. makes that future which Peter gives as present. The trial was then taking place, as the terms imply, and that with the object of *proving* and so purifying them. The idea, therefore, is so far the same as in chap. i. 7.—**as though a strange thing were befalling you.** The 'some' of the A. V. is uncalled for. Tyndale's rendering of the verse deserves notice—'Dearly beloved, be not troubled in this heat which is now come among you to try you, as though some strange thing had happened unto you.' The picture is that of sufferings already in operation or immediately impending. As to the apparent strangeness of such a lot Jeremy Taylor says:—'Jesus made for us a covenant of suffering. His doctrines were such as, expressly and by consequent, enjoin and suppose sufferings and a state of affliction; His very promises were sufferings; His Beatitudes were sufferings; His rewards, and His arguments to invite men to follow Him, were only taken from sufferings in this life and the reward of sufferings hereafter.'

Ver. 13. **But in as far as ye partake in the sufferings of the Christ, rejoice.** The article 'the' is prefixed to 'Christ' here, as if Peter had now in view His official character, or wished to call special attention to *Christ's* as the only sufferings of interest in the present connection. It is the simple 'Christ' in the previous notices of His sufferings (chap. i. 11, 19, ii. 21, iii. 18, iv. 1). In any case it is not the sufferings of the mystical Christ, but those of the personal Christ that are meant. The fellowship intended is fellowship with Christ in the things which He Himself suffered. Peter is not referring apparently to the deep mystery of a fellowship of *life* between Christ and believers in all things, which is the theme which Paul expounds (Gal. ii. 20; Phil. iii. 10, etc.), but to the simple fact that the world hates Christians because it hates Christ in them, and they, therefore, have to endure the same contradiction of sinners which He had to endure. In this sense they share in His sufferings, and because this is the case their trials may well be a cause of joy to them, and not of amazement. 'The point goes higher,' says Leighton. 'Though we think not the sufferings strange, yet may we not well think that rule somewhat strange, to *rejoice* in them? No, it will be found as reasonable as the other, being duly considered; and it rests upon the same ground, which is well able to bear both. . . . But add we this, and truly it completes the reason of this way in our saddest sufferings, that *in them we are partakers of the sufferings of Christ*.' The term rendered 'inasmuch as' by the A. V. means in 2 Cor. viii. 12, however, *in proportion as;* and in Rom. viii. 26 it seems to have the same sense (= we know not what we should pray for, in proportion to the need, to the propriety of the case). Here, therefore, the idea is probably that we should rejoice in our trials not merely *because* we are participants in what Christ suffered, but *in so far* as that is the case with us. The only sufferings which can bring us joy are those which we share with Him, sufferings like His. And the measure of the participation is the measure of the joy.—**in order that also in the revelation of his glory ye may rejoice exultant.** The particular expression, 'the revelation of His glory,' is peculiar to this passage. The same idea, and in part the same phrase, have met us, however, already in chap. i. 8. Peter had listened no doubt to his Lord's own prophecies of the time when 'the Son of man shall come in His glory' (Matt. xxv. 31, etc.). He speaks here, therefore, of two joys which are open to the Christian. He distinguishes between them, and at the same time indicates the relation in which the one stands to the other. There is a present joy, a '*light sown for the righteous, a gladness for the upright in heart*' (Ps. xcvii. 11), which suffering, instead of quenching it, should kindle. And there is the joy which the unveiling of the glory of the once suffering Christ shall bring with it,—a joy 'exultant' (on which term see chap. i. 8) surpassing this life's measure. When the former is enjoined in the 'rejoice' of the first half of the

verse, it is expressed in the present tense; what **is meant** being a disposition of joy which has to **be maintained** all through the burdened present. **When** the latter is presented in the 'rejoice' (unfortunately changed by the A. V. into 'be glad,' **as if** there had been a change in the term) of the **second half** it is given in a different tense, which **points** to a joy destined to enter once for all in **connection** with one great event, the revelation of Christ's glory. And the former is *in order* to the latter. The capacity for finding a softened, holy joy in the sufferings of the present, in so far as these are shared with Christ, is the condition of the capacity for entering into the radiant joy of the future glory.

Ver. 14. **If ye are reproached in the name of Christ, blessed (are ye).** A reassertion, but with a more definite reference to sufferings for *Christ's* **sake,** of the blessedness already affirmed in chap. iii. 14. The sentence is another echo of Matt. v. 11. The phrase 'in the name of Christ,' which is paraphrased by both the A. V. and the R. V. as '*for* the name of Christ,' is best interpreted, as is done by most, in the light of Christ's own explanation in Mark ix. 41—*in my name, because ye belong to Christ.* It covets, therefore, all kinds of reproach endured on account of bearing Christ's name and belonging to Him.—**because the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.** The form of this sentence in the original is uncommon, and has led to different interpretations. According to some, it means, 'the *element* of glory and the Spirit of God rest upon you' (Plumptre, etc.); a possible rendering and one yielding a good sense here. According to others the sense is, 'the *name* of glory and the Spirit of God rest upon you' (Hofmann); a rendering which gives the pertinent idea that the name of Christ, which is the cause of reproach, is nevertheless the name of honour. Bengel, supposing that in Jas. ii. 1 we should translate 'the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glory' (instead of 'the *Lord of* glory'), suggests that the term 'glory' here may be a title of Christ, as if=the Glorious One; a partial analogy to which may be found in Simeon's designation of the infant Saviour—'the glory of Thy people Israel' (Luke ii. 32). The sentence, however, is understood by most to contain two titles (some of the oldest manuscripts, indeed, make them three, by inserting the words 'and of power' after 'glory') of the same Spirit. He is first described as the Spirit *of glory, i.e.* to whom glory belongs, whose nature is glory, and whose gift, therefore, is also glory; as God also has the titles 'the God of glory' (Acts vii. 2), and 'the Father of glory' (Eph. i. 17). And it is then added that this Spirit is God's Spirit. His relation to suffering Christians is described as a *resting* upon them. The word is one which, either in itself or in a compound form, occurs in several suggestive passages of the O. T.,—in Num. xi. 25, 26, of the prophetic Spirit resting on the seventy elders; in 2 Kings ii. 15, of the spirit of Elijah resting on Elisha; and above all in Isa. xi. 2 (which is probably in Peter's mind here), of the Spirit of the Lord that was to rest upon Messiah. It is found also in some interesting connections in the N. T., as *e.g.* of the resting apart awhile which Christ enjoined on the Apostles (Mark vi. 31); in His charge to the slumbering three in Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 45; Mark xiv. 41); of the resting of the blessed dead from their labours (Rev. xiv. 13, etc.). It implies, therefore, the restful complacency with which He makes His abode with them. This is the reason why even in reproach and persecution they are 'blessed.' They whom the Spirit thus visits, though the shame of the Cross in heathen eyes may be theirs, have glory already with them; for He is the Spirit whose nature glory is, and where He enters, there the earnest of all glory is. They with whom the Spirit is pleased to dwell, have God Himself with them; for He is the Spirit of God, and where that presence is, there is rest. It is possible that Peter's designation of the Spirit here is shaped by his thoughts going back to the abiding presence of God as witnessed of old to Israel by the glory-cloud in the Holy of Holies. The words 'on their part . . . glorified' have such weight of ancient documents, both Manuscripts and Versions, against them as to make it more than doubtful whether they belong to the original text. They seem to have been a marginal explanation or addition which found its way at an early period into the text.

Ver. 15. **For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer.** The 'but' with which the A. V. begins the verse is wrong. Peter's word is 'for;' which is used here with an explanatory force, going back generally upon the ruling idea of the preceding verse. It is as if it had run thus—'It is of reproach *in the name of Christ*, and of that only, that I speak; for let no one suppose that he can suffer with just cause as an evil-doer, and yet have the blessedness that I affirm.' The 'as,' therefore, here has again the sense of 'in the character of.' Four different forms of evil are named, of which these first three go together as of one kind. The first two terms denote well-known specific forms of sin which deserve all the reproach that they entail. The third (on which see chap. ii. 12) is a general term covering other like offences, which would give just occasion for the reviling of heathen neighbours.—**or as a busy-body in other men's matters.** The fourth form of evil is marked off, by the repetition of the 'as,' from the former three as of a different kind and gravity. The word is one which is found nowhere else in the New Testament. There seems, indeed, to be no other independent occurrence of it in the whole range of Greek literature, except once in the late writings of the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite, where it is applied to the man who rashly intrudes into a strange office. Some suppose it, therefore, to have been constructed by Peter himself for his present purpose. The Vulgate, and some eminent interpreters, including Calvin, take the sense to be 'one who covets what belongs to others.' So Wycliffe gives 'desirer of other men's goods,' and the Rhemish Version 'coveter of other men's things.' Others take it to denote an 'informer' (Hilgenfeld). These meanings, however, are scarcely consistent with the elements of which the word is composed. Etymologically it may mean 'one who assumes oversight of matters not within his province,' or 'one who pries into other men's matters.' The R. V. rightly adopts the less official of these two senses—'a meddler in other men's matters.' Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan agree with this, all translating 'busy-body in other men's matters.' The term points, therefore, to an offence, which came as

close to the peculiar temptations of Christians, as the other three forms of evil (although these may have been once all too familiar to some of the early converts from heathenism) seemed to lie at a distance from them. It is that of officious interference in the affairs of their Gentile neighbours, in excess of zeal to conform them to the Christian standard. How this might be a temptation to some Christians may be seen from the appeal made to Christ Himself by one who heard Him—'Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me' (Luke xii. 13). That these busy-bodies were already troubling some of the churches, at least in the form of triflers bustling about what was not their own, may be gathered from what Paul had to say to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. iv. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 11).

Ver. 16. **But if (any man suffers) as a Christian**; that is, in the character of a Christian, or on account of his being a Christian. The verse is of great interest as one of three passages (Acts xi. 26, xxvi. 28, and this one) to which the occurrence of the name *Christian* in the New Testament is limited, and the only passage of the kind in the Epistles. The history of the name is a question of importance. It has been held by some to have originated with the Roman authorities (Ewald). It has also been supposed to have been at first a term of ridicule (de Wette, etc.). The generally accepted account of it, however, is that it originated with the *Gentiles* at Antioch, that it was formed on the model of other party names, such as Herodians, Marians, Pompeians, etc. (as = the followers of Herod, Marius, Pompey, etc.), and that it designated those to whom it was applied simply as followers of the party-leader, Christ. That it arose outside the Church is inferred from such facts as these, that in the New Testament itself other names, such as 'disciples,' 'brethren,' 'saints,' 'those of the way,' appear in use within the Church; that even Luke, who tells us where the disciples 'were called Christians first' (Acts xi. 26), does not himself apply it to believers; and that in at least two of the three New Testament instances (Acts xxvi. 28, and the present verse) it appears to be a term used by those outside. As it is in the highest degree unlikely that the *Jews* (to whom the new religionists were *Nazarenes*, etc., Acts xxiv. 5) should have coined a word out of the well-known Greek form of the name of their own Messiah in order to designate those whom they so bitterly opposed, it is necessary to suppose the Gentiles to have been the authors of the term. There are certain reasons, too, why it should have emerged first in Antioch, and there at the particular juncture noticed in the Acts. The Gentile element in the Church of Antioch seems to have been large enough to prevent the Church of Christ (for the first time, too, as far as can be gathered) from being easily identified with any Jewish sect, and to make it necessary for the Gentiles to find a distinctive name for it. And the time at which the Book of Acts states this to have taken place coincides with the time when Paul and Barnabas devoted a whole year to work in Antioch, and when, consequently, the growing Christian community there could scarcely fail to draw public attention to itself. The name which was thus made for the Church by those outside it, was soon adopted by Christians themselves, and gloried in as their most proper title, while it as soon became a term of obloquy with others. By the time of the great Apologists, and probably before the close of the second century, a play upon the name had become common, 'Christians' being pronounced 'Chrestians,' *i.e.* followers of the *Good*, or *Kind*, *One*; which form appears occasionally in the manuscripts.—**let him not be ashamed**; or, think it a shame (cf. specially Rom. i. 16; 2 Tim. i. 8, 12).—**but glorify God in this name.** The reading 'in this name' is better supported than the one which the A. V. renders 'on this behalf,' and which means simply 'in this matter' (it occurs again in the 'in this respect' of 2 Cor. iii. 10, and the 'in this behalf' of 2 Cor. ix. 3). The phrase 'in this name' goes back either upon the term 'Christian,' or on the 'in the name of Christ' in ver. 14. Those who were called to suffer for being Christians were to regard that not as a shameful thing, but as an honourable, and they were to suffer not in the spirit which took honour to themselves, but in that which gave all the glory to the God who counted them worthy of such a vocation. How soon in the history of the Church was martyrdom courted for its own sake in the spirit of the subtlest glorification of self!

Ver. 17. **Because it is the season for the judgment to begin with the house of God.** A reason why, under persecution and in all circumstances, they should so conduct themselves as to glorify God. The reason lies in the thought that the judgment by which God is to search all is already on the wing. The judgment is conceived of as a process which makes the house of God its starting-point, which is even now commencing there in the Church's baptism of suffering, and which cannot stop there. The language is scarcely consistent with the idea that the destruction of Jerusalem was already an accomplished fact. To a Jew like Peter that event would be too great a catastrophe to make it likely that he should speak of it as a *beginning* only of judgment. The phrase 'house of God' has the same sense here as the 'spiritual house' of chap. ii. 5, and is immediately identified with the living members of the Church in the next clause—'if *it* first *begin* at us.' To the 'house of God' itself this judgment was a process of sifting and separation, a judgment like that referred to by Paul (1 Cor. xi. 31), which had for its object that those tried by it should not be condemned with the world. But if so, what must it be to that outer, heathen world?—**but if first with us, what (shall be) the end of them that disobey the gospel of God?** The term translated 'disobey' has the same strong, positive sense here as in chap. ii. 7, 8 (which see), and in chap. iii. 1, 20. The 'end' is meant in the literal sense of the *conclusion* which shall come to them, or the goal they shall be brought to, not in the metaphorical sense of the *recompense*. Peter seems to have in his mind the sense, if not the very terms, of the solemn declarations of the prophets, *e.g.* Jer. xxv. 15, 29, xlix. 12; Ezek. iii. 16; Amos iii. 3. The judgment of God works its searching course out of the Church into the world of heathenism. And if it visits even the household of faith as a refining fire, what end can it portend for those who withstand the Gospel of Him whose prerogative judgment is? The question is like Christ's in Luke xxiii. 31. The answer, most eloquent of awe, to the question

about the 'end' is the answer left untold. 'There is no speaking of it: a curtain is drawn; silent wonder expresses it best, telling it cannot be expressed. How then shall it be endured?' (Leighton).

Ver. 18. **And if the righteous with difficulty is saved, the ungodly and sinner, where shall he appear?** These words are taken from the Greek translation of Prov. xi. 31. As they stand in the Hebrew text, their sense is somewhat doubtful. According to some, they mean simply that 'if the righteous man has his reward on earth, much more shall the unrighteous man have his punishment.' According to others, they mean that 'if the righteous man is recompensed on earth for his sins, much more shall the unrighteous man be requited for his sins.' It is the latter idea that appears in the free translation of the Septuagint, and it is this that Peter follows. The words 'in the earth' show that in Proverbs the requital in view is that which comes in the form of temporal blessings and chastisements. These words are omitted in the Greek Version as well as here. The word rendered 'scarcely' by the A. V., the R. V., and most of the old English Versions, has the sense of *hardly, not quite*, in the Classics, although its primitive sense was 'with pains,' 'with toil.' In the New Testament it seems to mean 'with difficulty' (Acts xiv. 18, xxvii. 7, 8; perhaps even Rom. v. 7), as also in the Book of Wisdom (ix. 16), where it corresponds to 'with labour.' Here, therefore, it does not express any uncertainty or incompleteness in the grace of salvation, but indicates with what difficulty and at what cost even the man who is in a right relation with God, is made secure in the judgment. And if that is so, how shall it be with the man who, as being both careless of God and in practice a sinner, is in a wrong relation to the Judge? The utmost emphasis is given to the description of the person, by putting the words 'the ungodly and sinner' before the interrogative 'where.' Again the question is left to suggest its own solemn answer,—an answer which is given in Ps. i. 5. It is observed that the term 'sinner' was almost a synonym for 'Gentile'—one outside the pale of God's people. Interrogations like these are hard indeed to square with the idea that in Peter's view the *end* of the despisers of grace was to be restoration.

Ver. 19. **Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to a faithful Creator in well-doing.** The 'wherefore' introduces this advice as an inference from what has been said about suffering, the relation of suffering Christians to their persecutors, the feelings of Christians in reference to their sufferings, and especially the hastening judgment of God which already begins in the trials of His House. In view of all this, the advice with which the train of thought is brought to a close worthy of it, is to fearless faith and earnest well-doing. The word 'also,' which the A. V. wrongly omits, is taken by some (Huther, etc.) to qualify the 'wherefore,' as if the sense were—'For this reason, too,' etc. But the analogous statement in iii. 14, and the fact that throughout the present paragraph the *strangeness* which Christians are tempted to discover in their own subjection to suffering, indicate rather that the 'also' qualifies the persons. The sense, therefore, is, 'let those also who have to suffer, strange as it may seem to them that they should have to suffer, commit their souls,' etc. The 'according to the will of God' does not refer to the submissive spirit in which the sufferers endure, but to the animating consideration that their sufferings come only by God's purpose. Their souls are regarded as a deposit which they should be willing to leave confidently in God's hands, the term rendered 'commit' (which the A. V. renders 'commit the keeping of') being used of entrusting persons or objects of value to one's care (Luke xii. 48; Acts xiv. 23, xx. 32; 1 Tim. i. 18; 2 Tim. i. 12, 14 ii. 2). It is the word which Christ Himself used upon the Cross—'Father, into Thy hands I commend (or, commit) my spirit' (Luke xxiii. 46). The God who is to be confidently trusted with so precious a deposit is designated a faithful Creator (the 'as' of the A. V. must be omitted on the ground of documentary evidence); *Creator* (which particular term is used only this once in the New Testament, and is to be taken in the literal sense, and not as if=possessor, or as if=Creator anew), and, therefore, One who has an interest in the work of His own hands; and *faithful* Creator, One whom we have every reason to regard as absolutely reliable.—**in well-doing.** The necessary accompaniment and evidence of a true trust in God, here put emphatically last as a caution against all indolent or immoral presuming on our special relationship to God. This is the single occurrence of the noun in the New Testament. 'To do well and to suffer well should be the only care of those who are called upon to suffer; God Himself will take care of all else' (Bengel).

CHAPTER V. 1–5.

Exhortations on the subject of the Relations between Office-bearers and others in the Church.

1 THE [a] Elders which are among you[1] I [b] exhort, who am also an Elder,[2] and a [c] witness of the [d] sufferings of Christ,[3] and also a [e] partaker of the [f] glory[4] that shall be
2 [g] revealed.[5] [h] Feed[6] the [i] flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*,[7] not by constraint, but [k] willingly;
3 not for [l] filthy lucre, but of a [m] ready mind; neither[8] as being [n] lords over *God's* [o] heritage,[9] but being[10] [p] ensamples to the
4 [q] flock: and when the [r] chief Shepherd shall [s] appear,[11] ye shall
5 [t] receive a[12] [u] crown of glory that fadeth not away.[13] Likewise,[14] ye [v] younger, [w] submit yourselves unto the elder:[15] yea, all *of you* be subject one to another,[16] and[17] be clothed[18] with [x] humility: for[19] [y] God [z] resisteth the [a] proud, and[20] [b] giveth grace to the [c] humble.

[a] Ver. 19: Acts xi. 30; 1 Tim. v. 17, 19; Tit. i. 5; Jas. v. 14.
[b] Acts ii. 40, xi. 23, xiv. 22, xv. 32; Rom. xii. 8; 2 Cor. ix. 5; 1 Thes. ii. 12, iv. 1, and Jude 3, etc.
[c] Mat. xviii. 16, xxvi. 65; Mk. xiv. 63; Lu. xxiv. 48; Acts i. 8, 22, ii. 32, iii. 15, v. 32, vi. 13, vii. 58, x. 39, 41, xiii. 31, xxii. 15, xxvi. 16, etc.
[d] See refs. at ch. i. 11.
[e] 1 Cor. x. 18; 2 Cor. i. 7; 2 Pet. i. 4, etc. [f] Ch. iv. 13. [g] Rom. viii. 18; Gal. ii. 23; also refs. at ch. i. 5. [h] Mat. ii. 6; Jo. xxi. 16; Acts xx. 28, etc.; also 1 Kin. xxv. 16; Isa. xl. 21, etc. [i] Ver. 3: Lu. xii. 32; Acts xx. 28; also Zech. x. 3, etc. [k] Heb. x. 26. [l] Cf. Tit i. 7, 11. [m] 2 Chron. xxix. 34. [n] Mat. xx. 25; Mk. x. 42; Acts xix. 16; also Num. xxi. 24, etc. [o] Deut. ix. 29; Isa. iii. 12 Cf. also Mat. xxvii. 35; Mk xv 24; Lu xxiii. 34; Jo. xix. 24; Acts i. 17, 26, viii. 21. xxvi. 18; Col. i. 12. [p] Phil. iii. 17; 1 Thes. i. 7; 2 Thes. iii. 9; 1 Tim. iv. 12; Tit. ii. 7. [q] Cf. refs. at ver. 1. [r] 2 Kin. iii. 4. Cf. also Heb. xiii. 20 [s] 2 Cor. v. 10; Col. iii. 4; 1 Jo. ii. 28. [t] See refs. at ch. i. 8. [u] 1 Cor. ix. 25; 2 Tim. iv. 8; Jas. i. 12; Rev. ii. 10; Prov. iv. 9. [v] Acts v. 6: 1 Tim. v. 1, 2, 11, 14; Tit. ii. 6. [w] See refs. at ch ii. 13. [x] Acts xx. 19; Eph. iv. 2; Phil. ii. 3; Col. ii. 18, 23, iii. 12. Cf. also ch. iii. 8. [y] Prov. iii 34; Jas. iv. 6. [z] Acts xviii. 6; Rom. xiii. 2; Jas. iv. 6; 1 Kin. xi. 34; Hos. ii. 6. [a] Lu i. 57; Rom. i. 30; 2 Tim. iii. 2; Jas iv. 6. [b] Ex iii. 21; Eph. iv. 29; Jas. iv. 6. [c] Ps. xxxiii. 18; Mat. xi. 29; Lu. i. 52; Jas. i. 9, iv. 6; Rom. xii. 16; 2 Cor. vii. 6, x. 1.

[1] *read rather*, Elders therefore among you I exhort
[2] *literally*, the fellow-elder and witness
[3] *or*, of the Christ
[4] *literally*, the partaker also of the glory
[5] *or*, destined to be revealed
[6] *rather*, tend
[7] *omit* taking the oversight *thereof*
[8] nor yet
[9] as lording it over the congregations
[10] becoming
[11] is manifested
[12] the
[13] *or*, amaranthine
[14] In like manner
[15] *or*, elders
[16] yea, all one to another
[17] *omit* and
[18] gird yourselves
[19] because
[20] but

We come now upon a brief series of injunctions, dealing with the spirit in which the members of Christ's Church should occupy their respective positions, and bear themselves toward each other. These counsels are remarkable for their point and precision. They are not less remarkable for their tenderness. They are offered as the recommendation of one who, though entitled to speak in some respects of superior privilege, meekly identifies himself with the persons to whom they are addressed. These persons are in the first instance those who are charged with office and special ecclesiastical duty, and in the second instance the whole membership of the Church. What concerns the soundness of the inner life of the Church is still in view. The exhortations are given in immediate connection with the preceding statements about the end, the judgment already beginning with the house of God, and the necessity of earnest well-doing in all things. The watchword of *submission* which rang through so large a space of the second and third chapters, is heard again here.

Ver. 1. **Elders, therefore, among you I exhort.** Instead of '*the* elders,' which the A. V. and R. V. both (though probably for different reasons) adopt, the better supported reading is simply 'elders.' The omission of the article perhaps generalizes the statement, as if Peter had said, 'Such as are elders among you I exhort.' The best authorities also insert 'therefore,' which the A. V. omits. This implies that what is to be said of the duties of elders is to be urged specially on the ground of the considerations with which the previous chapter has closed, and as involved in that 'well-doing' which is to accompany fearless trust in God under the pressure of fiery trial. The next verse makes it clear that the term 'elders,' or (to reproduce the Greek word itself) 'presbyters,' is used in the official sense. The New Testament gives no account of the rise of this office in the Christian Church. When it first

mentions Christian elders, it simply refers to them as the recognised persons in the Church of Jerusalem to whom the contributions of the Church of Antioch for the relief of 'the brethren which dwelt in Judæa,' were sent 'by the hands of Barnabas and Saul' (Acts xi. 30). When it next mentions them, it is to state that Paul and Barnabas 'ordained elders in every church' in the course of the first missionary journey in Asia (Acts xiv. 23). It has been a question, therefore, whether the Apostles proceeded from the first on the definite plan of organizing the Christian Church on the model of existing institutions, and at once took over this office and others from the synagogue, or whether, without setting out with any definite plan, they simply adopted the various offices as circumstances and experience from time to time made it wise or necessary to do so (on which see Neander, *Hist. of the Planting of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 30, etc., Bohn). On the term 'exhort'—a term with a fulness of meaning (covering *persuasion*, *entreaty*, *admonition*, *consolation*, etc.) which no single English word can reproduce—see on chap. ii. 11.—**your fellow-elder**: or, co-presbyter. This compound word occurs only here. So John calls himself simply 'the elder' (2 John i.; 3 John 1). Any claim to primacy is far enough removed from Peter's meek association of himself with the men of these scattered Asiatic churches as simply an elder like themselves. Even apostolic authority is waived for the time.—**and witness of the sufferings of the Christ.** One distinction, and only one, is alluded to. It is that of having seen what Christ suffered. Among all these fellow-elders he was the one who had witnessed that. The distinction did not give him lordship over them, but it did give him a title to speak to Christians who were to suffer, and who were tempted to think their trial a strange thing. This word 'witness' is used in the N. T. not only in the simple sense of 'spectator' (*e.g.* Acts x. 41, etc.), in the extended sense of 'one who testifies of what he has seen' (*e.g.* Acts i. 8, etc.), and in the forensic sense of one who gives evidence at law (*e.g.* Matt. xxvi. 65), but also in the ethical sense of 'one who seals his faith in Christ by suffering,' or 'martyr' (Acts xxii. 20; Rev. ii. 13, xvii. 6). Hence some think that in designating himself a *witness of the sufferings of the Christ*, Peter means here that he was a *sharer in Christ's sufferings*. But the expression is to be understood rather in the light of what the Apostles were declared to be to the Church—eye-witnesses of what they preached. It is the nearest approach, therefore, which Peter allows himself to make at present to an appeal to his apostolic authority.—**the partaker also of the glory destined to be revealed.** The 'glory' is presented here in the same large and inclusive sense as in Rom. viii. 18; Col. iii. 4; 1 John iii. 2. Peter speaks of himself as heir of that. But in so doing he also suggests that those associated with him in faith have the like honour. If for a moment, therefore, he distinguished himself from them, he at once places himself again on common ground with them. Neither here, nor in what follows, is there any allusion even to the distinction so solemnly given him by his Lord (Matt. xvi. 18, 19). Having engaged the interest and sympathy of the elders by the threefold designation of himself, he now speaks freely and emphatically of their duties and dangers.

Ver. 2. **Tend the flock of God.** The 'feed' of the A. V. is too limited a rendering. In the memorable scene by the sea of Galilee (John xxii. 15–17), which is probably in Peter's mind here, Christ gave three commissions to the restored Apostle. Of these the first and third dealt with the duty of *feeding* in the strict sense of the word (the verb used in vers. 15 and 17 being one which conveys that idea only); but the second (in ver. 16) referred to a wider range of ministry than that, and was expressed by a different verb. It is this latter term that is taken up by Peter here. The idea is that of *acting all the shepherd's part*, including protection, rule, guidance, etc., as well as the providing of pasture. The charge reminds us also of Paul's counsel to the Ephesian elders (Acts xx. 28). In the oldest of the classical writers the relations of ruler to people are familiarly described as the relations of shepherd to flock. The same figure occurs frequently both in the Old Testament and in the New. In the former it is used of Jehovah, of Messiah, and of the political heads of the theocratic people (Ps. lxxviii. 71; Jer. iii. 15, xii. 10, xxv. 34; Ezek. xxxiv. 2). In the latter it is used of Christ, and of those in office in the Church. The designation 'the flock of God' expresses both the unity of the Church and the fact that it is God's possession, not that of the elders.—**which is in you.** It has been felt singular that the flock should be described as *among* or (as the word literally means) *in* the elders. Hence it has been proposed to render the phrase rather 'as much as in you is' (so the margin of the A. V., also Calvin, etc.). Others explain the form of the expression as due to the wish to bring out the peculiar intimacy of union between the elders and the members, as the same preposition is used in the analogous charge in Acts xx. 28—'take heed . . . to all the flock over (literally *in*) the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.' The ordinary local sense, however, is quite in point, whether it be taken as=*which is in your districts*; or as=*which is within your reach* (Luther, etc.), or as=*which is under your care* (Hofmann, Huther, etc.). The idea is that this church of God, which is the flock, is to be tended by these particular elders, so far as it exists where they themselves are settled and have it thus put under their charge.—**taking the oversight thereof.** It is doubtful whether this clause belongs to the text. The R. V. retains it in the form 'exercising the oversight.' It is omitted, however, by the two oldest manuscripts, and by the most recent editors. If it is retained, it states one direction which the *tending* is to take, namely, that of *overseeing* the flock. The verb is the one with which the word *bishop* (*i.e. overseer*) is connected. We find it only once again in the N. T., viz. in Heb. xii. 15, where it is rendered 'looking diligently.' If it is omitted here, the *tending* is defined directly by the three adverbial and participial clauses which follow. Each of these, too, consists of two parts, the thing to be avoided being in each case first set solemnly over against the thing positively enjoined. Greater force is thus given to the statement of the spirit in which the *tending* is to be discharged.—**not constrainedly**; or, as the R. V. gives it, *not of constraint*. The adverb occurs nowhere else in the N. T. It is of the rarest possible occurrence in Classical Greek.—**but willingly**: a term found only once again in the N. T., viz. in Heb. x. 26,

where it is rendered 'wilfully.' The R. V. adds here the words 'according unto God,' on the genuineness of which the divided state of the documentary evidence makes it difficult to pronounce a decided opinion. This first definition describes the elder's duty as one which is not to be taken up like an unwelcome burden imposed on one, or a task from which one cannot retreat. In such circumstances there will be, as Calvin suggests, a dull and frigid discharge of the work. We have a similar antithesis in 1 Cor. ix. 17, and Philem. 14.—**nor yet for filthy lucre.** The negative is more than the simple 'not' of the A. V. It has the force of a climax—'nor yet.' The adverb 'for filthy lucre,' which denotes the corrupt motive here, has also a very strong sense. It means *in sordid greed of gain*. This is its only occurrence in the N. T. Its idea is otherwise expressed in 1 Tim. iii. 8; Tit. i. 7, 11. The support which those are entitled to receive who preach the Gospel, or otherwise devote themselves to the service of Christ's Church (Luke x. 7; 2 Cor. ix. 14), becomes base gain, if it is made the motive of the service.—**but of a ready mind.** This again is an adverb found nowhere else in the N. T. The adjective describes Paul as *ready* to preach the Gospel (Rom. i. 15), and is used by Christ when He says to Peter himself and his drowsy comrades in the garden, 'the spirit indeed is *willing*' (Matt. xxvi. 41), or, 'the spirit truly is ready' (Mark xiv. 38). Here the word expresses the prompt alacrity which marks the service which is undertaken for love of the work—'a mind forward of itself, not measuring its efforts by the prospect of external advantage, but quickened and impelled by its own inward and Divine principles' (Lillie).

Ver. 3. **nor yet as lording it; or, *in the character of those who lord it.*** The expression is again a very strong one. An uncommon compound form of the verb 'to rule' is chosen, which conveys the idea of *high-handed* rule, or a rule which is detrimental to the interests of the flock. Bengel notices how, as the elders in course of time assumed lordship, the Latin word *Senior, elder*, became the Italian *Signore, Lord, Sir*. Rule and office are recognised in the N. T. Church, and those who guide its affairs receive a variety of names (comp. Luke xxii. 26; Rom. xii. 8; 1 Thess. v. 12, etc.). But they are never described as being *lords* over the flock (Luke xxii. 25). If lordship, therefore, is nowhere recognised, much more is oppressive rule, or 'overruling' as the margin of the A. V. gives it, repudiated.—**over the congregations.** The Greek noun used here is that (*cleros*) from which our English word *clergy* comes. It means a *lot*, then what is *apportioned by lot*, and so anything, such as an office, a heritage, or a possession, which is assigned to one. Strange meanings have been given it here, *e.g.* church property, the possessions of worldly rulers, the province of the Roman proconsul, etc. Some eminent Roman Catholic interpreters have held it = the clergy; and both Wycliffe and the Rhemish Version actually render it 'the clergy,' apparently making a simple transference of the term used in the Vulgate. It has been also taken to mean *estates*, as if the idea were, 'do not rule haughtily as men do who exercise rule over estates belonging to themselves' (Hofmann). But while the word has that sense in Classical Greek, it does not seem to have it in Biblical Greek. In the Old Testament it is one of the terms by which Israel is designated God's *heritage* or *inheritance* (Deut. ix. 29, etc.). Hence it is supposed that the term is chosen here, in order to express the fact that the Church of Christ is now that heritage of God which Israel originally was designed to be. So the A. V., following the Genevan, translates it '*God's* heritage.' The plural form is then explained to be due to the circumstance that the one flock or Church of Christ is conceived as distributed among the various churches in which these elders laboured. And the point of the phrase lies then in the idea that these churches were *God's* possession, and not at the disposal of the elders. It is most natural, however, to take the word as practically equivalent to 'congregations.' These were the *lots*, or *charges*, assigned to the elders. So the word 'charge' has come to mean a *congregation* in ecclesiastical phraseology. Tyndale and Cranmer are not far astray in rendering it 'parishes.' The R. V. comes short only in translating the plural noun as a singular—'over the *charge* allotted to you.' The use of the term is due perhaps to the pastoral imagery which underlies the whole paragraph. The whole pastoral wealth of a great proprietor would make one flock, over which there would be a Chief Shepherd. But the flock would be broken up into various contingents, pasturing in different localities. Each of these would be a *cleros*, or *lot*, over which would be a shepherd responsible to the Chief Shepherd (see Dr. John Brown *in loc.*).—**but becoming examples of the flock.** Peter uses three different terms for the idea of a *model* or *pattern*. In chap. ii. 11 the word is one which means literally a *writing-copy*. In the Second Epistle, chap. ii. 6, we have another (occurring also in John xiii. 15; Heb. iv. 11, viii. 5, ix. 23; Jas. v. 10) which is used particularly of the sculptor or painter's model. In the present passage the word (the same as in 1 Cor. x. 6; Phil. iii. 7; 1 Thess. i. 7; 2 Thess. iii. 9; 1 Tim. iv. 12; Tit. ii. 7; Heb. viii. 5) is the term *type*, which has a wide range of application, from a mere mark or footprint up to the living *likeness* of the father which appears in the child. It is the word which Thomas uses when he speaks of the 'print' of the nails (John xx. 25). The elders, therefore, were themselves to be what those under their charge should be. The secret of their rule was to lie not in a lordly spirit, but in the persuasion of a consistent life. The things which they are cautioned against in these two verses are the three vices which, as Calvin observes, and as Church history too plainly shows, are wont to be most injurious to the Church.

Ver. 4. **And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested.** The title 'Chief Shepherd' is nowhere else given to Christ. It is appropriate here, where the duties and rewards of those are dealt with who are called to act the Shepherd's part of tending Christ's flock for Him on earth. In chap. ii. 25 He is called simply 'the Shepherd;' in Heb. xii. 20 He is 'that great Shepherd;' in John x. 11, etc., He names Himself 'the good Shepherd.' The word 'manifested' is the same as in chap. i. 20, as also in John i. 31; Col. iii. 4; 1 John ii. 28, iii. 2, etc.—**ye shall receive**; on this see on chap. i. 9.—**the amaranthine crown of glory.** In this passage, as also in Rev. ii. 10, the A. V. overlooks the article, and gives '*a*

crown.' Peter speaks of '*the* crown'—the one well known to Christian hope. He calls it 'the crown *of glory*,' meaning by that not merely that it is a *glorious* one, but that it consists of glory. Glory itself, and nothing less than that, will crown the heads of the elders as their reward for the meek discharge of their vocation. Isaiah speaks of 'a crown of *beauty*' (lii. 3); Paul of 'a crown of *righteousness*' (2 Tim. iv. 8); James (i. 12) and John (Rev. ii. 10) of 'the crown of *life*.' It is doubtful whether the figure is drawn here from the wreath with which the victors in the Greek games were crowned, from the diadem set on the heads of kings, or from the wreath which the Jews themselves made use of on festal occasions. It is less likely in the case of Peter than in that of Paul, that the imagery should be taken from the heathen spectacles. For these were abhorrent to the Palestinian Jews. The word chosen for 'crown,' though different from the ordinary term for a *diadem*, appears to have that sense occasionally (*e.g.* Rev. iv. 10), and it is possible, therefore, that here, as also perhaps in Rev. ii. 10, the idea is that of kingship. But it is most probable on the whole that Peter's term is borrowed from familiar Jewish practice, and that the figure of the 'crown' points more generally to the *honour and joy* into which Christ's faithful stewards shall enter when He returns. The 'crown' is further described by an adjective which differs but slightly from the one already applied to the 'inheritance' in chap. i. 4. It may be translated, therefore, simply *unwithering*. It seems, however, rather to be formed immediately from the noun which denotes the flower known as the 'amaranth.' We should translate it, therefore, *amaranthine*, the figure being that of a wreath constructed of *immortelles*, which change neither in contour nor in colour. So Milton speaks of the 'blissful bowers of *amarantine* shade' whence 'the sons of light hasten' (*P. L.* Book xi.). Compare also the description in the third book of *Paradise Lost:*

> 'And to the ground
> With solemn adoration down they cast
> Their crowns inwove with *amarant* and gold;
> Immortal *amarant*, a flower which once
> In Paradise, fast by the tree of life,
> Began to bloom.'

And Cowper's,

> 'The only amaranthine flower on earth
> Is virtue; th' only lasting treasure, truth.'
> *Task*, B. iii.

Ver. 5. **In like manner, ye younger, submit yourselves to the elders.** The exhortation clearly is to the cherishing of a spirit of deference on the part of one class to another. But the question is, Are the two classes introduced here in respect of *age* simply, or in respect of *office*? Seeing that in the opening verse the term 'elders' is used in the official sense, it is natural to suppose it to have the same sense here. It is not less natural to suppose the correlative term 'younger' to have a similar official sense. And this is supported by the circumstance that in connection with the narrative of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 5, 10) we read of the 'young men' as if they were a distinct class, charged with certain manual services to the Church, who accordingly rise up at once and perform unsummoned the duty which had to be done then. In this case, the exhortation would bear upon the relations of the junior and subordinate office-bearers (not necessarily identical with the deacons), or the recognised servants of the Church, to the presbyters or elders. It is alleged on the other hand, however, that there is no historical notice of the institution of any such lower order of church officers, and that the passage in Acts v. does not necessarily imply the existence of a distinct class known officially as the 'young men' or the 'younger men.' Hence the phrase 'ye younger' is taken by some (Wiesinger, Alford, etc.) to mean the general membership of the Church, its members as distinguished from its office-bearers. Others (Huther, etc.) understand the official sense to be dropped here, and both the 'elders' and the 'younger' to be designations of age only. Others (de Wette, etc.) suppose the 'elders' to mean the office-bearers proper, and the 'younger' to denote neither a junior order nor the entire non-official membership, but only those members who were young in years and consequently under stronger temptation to show themselves insubordinate to their ecclesiastical rulers. The term 'elder' in the Hebrew Church was first a title of age and then a title of office. As those who were elders by age were in ordinary circumstances chosen as elders by office, the word combined both ideas, and with these it probably passed into the Christian Church. And even before there was any direct creation or recognition of distinct offices, the young men would naturally be looked to for the discharge of such duties in the Christian Church as they had probably been accustomed to in the Synagogue, and this would have a *quasi*-official position.—**yea, all one to another.** The 'be subject,' which the A. V. inserts after 'yea, all of you,' must be omitted on the authority of the best documents. This leaves it open to connect the clause either with what precedes or with what follows. In the latter case (which is adopted by the text of the R. V., and by Alford, etc.) the idea is—'Yea, all of you, in reference one to another, gird yourselves,' etc. In the former case (which is the more grammatical construction) the clause extends to the whole body of Christian people, without distinction of office or age, the same exhortation to mutual deference and submission which has already been addressed to a particular class.—**Gird yourselves with humility.** The 'and' of the A. V. does not belong to the text. As to the grace of *humility* see on chap. iii. 8. The verb trans'ated 'be clothed with' by the A. V. occurs nowhere else in the N. T. The precise idea which it conveys has, therefore, been variously understood. Some give it the sense of 'adorn yourselves' (Calvin, etc.), and so the Genevan Version renders it 'deck yourselves inwardly with.' Others think that it is formed from a noun meaning the *frock* or *apron* of a slave, and would render it 'tie yourselves up with humility as with the slave's cape.' To put on such a cape was to prepare for discharging the duties of a servant. The word would thus be chosen in order to indicate 'the menial service which they were to render one to another; in the same way as our Lord showed it in His own example and person when He girded Himself with a towel and washed the disciples' feet' (Humphrey, *Comm. on the Rev. Vers.*, p. 446). The Vulgate and the Rhemish Versions, again, translate it 'insinuate humility.' The word seems to be derived, however, rather from a simpler noun denoting a *band*. It thus means to *fasten*,

not merely to *put on*, but to *gird tightly on*; the grace of humility being not the girdle that fastens other things, but the thing which is girt firmly about one. It is therefore a stronger form of Paul's 'Put on . . humbleness of mind' (Col. iii. 12). Bengel paraphrases it admirably thus: 'Indue and wrap yourselves about with it, so that it may be impossible for the covering of humility to be torn from you by any force.' Tyndale's rendering is, 'Knit yourselves together in lowliness of mind.'—**because God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.** The 'resisteth' indicates a strong and deliberate opposition. Its idea is that of *setting oneself in array against one.* The importance of the duty of humility is enforced by a sentence taken (with the substitution of *God* for *the Lord*) from the Greek text of Prov. iii. 34. This sentence is introduced in a similar connection in Jas. iv. 6. It states a principle on which God acts. It is the principle which is recognised in the Magnificat (Luke i. 51–53), and of which a figure has been seen by many in the action of rain or dew on hill and vale. Leighton, *e.g.*, says—'His sweet dews and showers of grace slide off the mountains of pride, and fall on the low valleys of humble hearts, and make them pleasant and fertile.' But in this he is anticipated by Augustine, who speaks of grace descending into humble souls as 'the water flows together toward the lowliness of the valley, and flows down from the swelling hill.' Compare also J. D. Burns' rendering of the same principle:—

> 'The dew that never wets the flinty mountain
> Falls in the valleys free;
> Bright verdure fringes the small desert-fountain,
> But barren sand the sea.'

CHAPTER V. 6–11.

General Exhortations and Encouragements on the subject of the Chastenings of God and the Temptations of the Devil.

6 [a]HUMBLE yourselves therefore under the [b]mighty hand
of God, that he may [c]exalt you in [d]due time,
7 [e]casting all your [f]care[1] upon him, for[2] he [g]careth for you.
8 [h]Be sober, be [i]vigilant: because[3] your [k]adversary the devil,
as a [l]roaring lion, walketh about, [m]seeking whom he may
9 [n]devour. Whom [o]resist [p]stedfast in the faith, [q]knowing that
the [r]same afflictions are [s]accomplished in your [t]brethren that
10 are in the world. But the God of [u]all grace, who hath[4]
[v]called us[5] into[6] his [w]eternal glory by Christ Jesus,[7] after
that ye have suffered a [x]while,[8] make[9] you [y]perfect, [z]stablish,
11 strengthen, settle[10] you. To him *be* glory and [a]dominion for
ever and ever.[11] Amen.

[a] Lu. xviii. 14; 2 Cor. xi. 7; Isa. xl. 4.
[b] Ex. iii. 19; Deut. iii. 24; Job xxx. 21.
[c] Jas. iv. 10; Mat xxiii. 12; Lu. xiv. 11.
[d] Mat. xxiv. 43; Lu. xx. 10.
[e] Ps. lv. 22;
[f] Mat. xiii. 22; Lu. xix. 35. Lu. xxi. 34; 2 Cor. xi. 28.
[g] Mat. xxii 16; Jo. x. 13, xii. 6.
[h] See refs. at ch. i. 13.
[i] Mat. xxiv. 42, xxv. 13, xxvi. 38, 40, 41; Mk. xiii. 34;
[k] Jud. xiv. 3; Ps. xxi. 13; Zech. xi. 3.
[l] Mat. xii. 46, 47; Acts xiii 8; Gal. i. 10.
[m] Mat. xxiii. 24; 1 Cor. xv. 54; 2 Cor. ii. 7, v. 4; Heb. xi. 29; Rev. xii. 16.
[n] Mat. v. 35; Eph. vi. 13; Jas. iv. 7.
[o] 2 Tim ii 19; Heb v. 12, 14.
[p] Ch. i. 18.
[q] 1 Cor. xi. 5.
[r] Rom. xv. 28; 2 Cor. vii. 1, viii. 6; Heb. viii. 5.
[s] Ch. ii. 17.
[t] 2 Cor. i. 3, ix. 8.
[u] See refs. at ch. ii. 9.
[v] 2 Tim. ii. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 7.
[w] See refs. at ch. i. 6.
[x] 1 Cor. i. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Heb. xiii. 21.
[y] Lu. xxii. 32; Rom. i. 11, xvi. 25.
[z] Ch. iv. 11; 1 Tim. vi. 16; Jude 25; Rev. i. 6, v. 13.
[a] Ch. iv. 11; 1 Tim. vi.

[1] anxiety
[2] because
[3] *omit* because
[4] *omit* hath
[5] you
[6] unto
[7] in Christ
[8] a little while
[9] will Himself make
[10] *omit* settle
[11] *read simply*, to whom be the dominion unto the ages

The grace of humility closed the foregoing series of counsels. It appeared there as the safeguard against a lordly spirit on the side of those in office in the Church, and a spirit of insubordination on the side of the members and servants of the Church. It is reintroduced as the first of another brief succession of counsels addressed to all. It is enjoined now as a grace to be cherished toward God Himself, to be studied in especial under His afflictive dispensations, and to be valued as the condition upon which He suspends the honour which comes through suffering. It opens the way to other kindred duties,—sobriety, vigilance, stedfastness in faith. The exhortations are then crowned by a devout assurance of the graciousness of God's intention in all the trials of the time.

Ver. 6. **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God.** Once more is the question of affliction touched, and the duty of

submission urged. This time, however, the matter is pressed in connection with the statement of the general principle on which God acts in giving grace to the humble. The phrase 'mighty hand' of God occurs nowhere else in the N. T. In the O. T. it is a figure both of man's power (Ex. iii. 19) and of God's (Deut. iii. 24; Job xxx. 21, etc.). It is not limited in the O. T. to God's power in *afflicting* or *punishing*. Neither is it so limited here. The Hand that lays low also exalts. The reason why the irresistible power of that Hand is exerted in chastening is that it may be seasonably exerted in exalting.—**in order that he may exalt you in due time.** God has His purpose in laying His Hand heavily upon us. That purpose can be given effect to only on condition that we be to Him what He is to us. Self-exaltation will frustrate His purpose. But if we humble ourselves as He humbles us, we shall reap the 'interest of tears' and be glorified through sorrow. God has His own time, nevertheless, for fulfilling the purpose of His chastenings. That time, whether it come late or early, —not our own hour, for which, like Mary at the marriage in Cana, we are so apt impatiently to plead,—is the 'due time,' the fit season.

Ver. 7. **Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you.** While the A. V. adopts the one term 'care' in both clauses, the original has two distinct terms, the former meaning '*anxious* care,' the latter 'interest' or 'concern.' The A. V. follows Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan. Wycliffe gives 'cast ye all your business in to Him: for to Him is cure of you.' The Rhemish has 'casting all your carefulness upon Him, because He hath care of you.' Peter seems to have Ps. lv. 22 in mind, although he gives the second clause a different form from what it has in the Psalm. Compare also Ps. xxxvii. 5. The fact that God retains a loving concern for us is our reason for rolling the burden of our anxieties upon Him. This we do by prayer, and He shows His care for us by helping us to throw off the weight, or by sustaining us under it. Humility of mind is a chief protection against anxiety. Where there is the disposition to humble ourselves beneath God's hand, there the disposition to trust Him will also appear. The anxiety is described here as a burden (='your *whole* anxiety') which is to be cast as one whole upon God—'not every anxiety as it arises; for none will arise, if this transference has been effectually made' (Alford). In the present instance the burden is not the affliction itself, but those doubtful, carking thoughts about affliction which double its pain. Compare Shakespeare's

> 'Care is no cure, but rather a corrosive,
> For things that are not to be remedied.'
> —*Henry VI.* I. 3. 3.

and the remarkable words of the Stoic slave, Epictetus (*Dissert.* ii. 10), 'From thyself, from thy thoughts, cast away grief, fear, desire, envy, malevolence, avarice, effeminacy, intemperance. But it is not possible to cast away these things in any other way than by fixing our eyes upon God only, by turning our affections on Him only, by being consecrated to His orders' (Ramage's rendering).

Ver. 8. **Be sober**; see on chap. i. 13, where *sobriety* is noticed as a condition to the highest type of Christian hope. In chap. iv. 7 it appears as a preparation for prayer. In this third recommendation, it is enjoined as a protection against Satan.—**be watchful.** The verb rendered '*vigilant*' here, and in 1 Thess. v. 10 'wake,' is elsewhere (in some twenty-one occurrences) always rendered 'watch' by the A. V. Its use here perhaps indicates painful, personal recollection on the writer's part. It is the word which Jesus addressed to Peter and his comrades in the garden—'What, could ye not *watch* with me one hour?' (Matt. xxvi. 40).—**your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom to devour.** The 'because' which is prefixed by the A. V., is not found in the best manuscripts. Its omission gives a nervous force to the whole statement. The word 'adversary' means primarily an opponent in a lawsuit, and then an opponent generally. It is much the same as the O. T. term Satan. This is the only N. T. passage in which it is a name for man's great spiritual enemy, who is immediately designated also the 'devil,' or *accuser*. While this adversary is elsewhere described as a *serpent* in respect of his cunning, he is here appropriately compared to a 'roaring lion,' where threatenings and persecutions are in view. The Hebrews had several terms for the terrible roar of the lion. They had one (used also of *thunder*) which expressed in particular the roar of the hungry creature in quest of its prey. It is that one which seems to be represented by Peter's word here. There is great force also in the other descriptions,—'walketh about' (cf. Job i. 7, ii. 2), as if the wide earth were his range, and 'seeking whom he may *devour*,' or, as it literally is, *swallow*, or *gulp down*, in his famished rage. The fury and vigilance of this enemy, the dread means which he employs and the end to which he applies them, make sobriety and watchfulness imperative on our side. The writer who pens these words, so bluntly expressive of his own belief in the existence of a personal spirit of evil, is the disciple to whom Jesus specially addressed the mingled warnings and assurances which Luke records (xxiv. 31, 32)—'Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.'

Ver. 9. **Whom resist, stedfast in the faith.** The 'stedfast' means *stable* or *firm*. It is translated 'sure' in 2 Tim. ii. 19, and 'strong' in Heb. v. 12, 14 (its only other New Testament occurrences), while its verb is rendered 'establish' in Acts xvi. 5, and 'receive strength,' 'make strong,' in Acts iii. 7, 16. By 'the faith' here is meant not the objects believed, but the subjective conviction, the power or principle of faith (cf. 1 John v. 4, 5). The spiritual adversary is neither to be fled from nor to be supinely regarded, but to be withstood. He will be faced, however, to little purpose where he is met by weak and wavering conviction. Only he who is strong in the faith which makes him a Christian, is strong enough to vanquish this foe in the assaults which he makes with the engine of persecution. Compare Jas. iv. 7, and above all, Paul's view of the shield of faith and its efficiency in Eph. vi. 16.—**knowing that the same sufferings are being accomplished in your brotherhood who are in the world.** The phrase 'the same sufferings' means, literally, 'the same things of the sufferings,' or 'the identities of the sufferings.' The construction of the sentence is also otherwise peculiar. Hence it is variously rendered, *e.g.*,

as = considering that the same sufferings are accomplishing themselves in your brotherhood, etc. (Huther); or as = knowing that ye are accomplishing the same sufferings with your brotherhood, etc; or as = considering how to pay the same tribute of suffering as your brethren in the world; or simply as = knowing that the same sufferings are being inflicted on your brotherhood, etc. (Wilke). The idea in any case is sufficiently plain. Their courage in withstanding, with a firm faith, the devil's attempts to seduce them through their sufferings, should be helped by the consideration that they occupied no singular position (cf. 1 Cor. x. 13). They suffered only as the whole Christian brotherhood suffered. The same dispensation of tribulation was fulfilling itself in them and in the brotherhood, the same tribute of suffering was being paid by them and by the brotherhood, and for the same reason. They were both 'in the world.' On the phrase 'the brotherhood' see on chap. ii. 17. Compare Gray's lines:

> To each his sufferings, all are men,
> Condemned alike to groan;
> The tender for another's pain,
> The unfeeling for his own.'

Ver. 10. **But the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, will himself perfect, stablish, strengthen you.** Several changes must be made upon the A. V. here, which have been rightly recognised by the R. V. Weight of documentary evidence displaces 'us' by 'you,' turns the tenses into futures, inserts 'himself' before these verbs, and excludes the final 'settle.' It is also probable that we should read 'in Christ' or 'in the Christ,' instead of 'in Christ Jesus.' The verse, therefore, is an assurance, not a prayer. It thus conveys far greater encouragement to those who have to face persecution, and resist the devil's roarings and seductions. This assurance is introduced as a contrast with, or qualification of, what has been said of the burdens of believers. Hence the opening 'but,' or 'moreover' (not 'and'). Such things they must expect from the adversary, *but* what may they not expect from God? They are themselves appointed to the trying duty of strenuous resistance; *but*, if so, God also will act with them in the perilous situation. As it is *God's* part that Peter is now urging for the final comfort of his readers, that name is set emphatically first, and the solemn 'Himself' (which is missed by Tyndale, Cranmer, and the A. V., but caught by Wycliffe and the Versions of Geneva and Rheims) is brought in before the verbs which state the things which He is certain to do (cf. 1 Thess. iii. 11, v. 23). The designation of God as the 'God of all grace,' the God who is so rich in grace that all grace comes from Him, adds to the strength of the assurance. The title is itself a consolation. Still higher, if possible, might these drooping saints be lifted into the rare atmosphere of a gracious confidence, by the thought of what God had done for them in the decisive change which first gave them Christian hope. He had called them in His Son (by uniting them with Him), and that with the very object of bringing them in the end to His eternal glory. So great an act of grace was the pledge of further gifts of grace. Unless so great an object is to be frustrated, it must be that God will carry them through their sufferings, and make these the means of *perfecting*, *stablishing*, and *strengthening* them with a view to that glory. The glory, indeed, into which they were called is to be theirs only after suffering. Yet the space of suffering will be brief. The 'a while' of the A. V. does not fairly represent the original. Tyndale is better—'after ye have suffered a little affliction.' What Peter has in mind is not the *need* of suffering at least for a time, but the shortness of the suffering. The idea conveyed by the 'perfect' is that of *preparing completely*, *equipping fully*, *bringing into faultless order*, so that nothing shall be wanting. It is the term which is used for 'perfect' in such passages as Luke vi. 10, 1 Cor. i. 10, 1 Thess. iii. 10, Heb. xiii. 21; and it is applied to the *mending* of broken nets (Matt. iv. 21), and the *restoring* of one in fault (Gal. vi. 1), etc. The 'stablish' means to *plant firmly*, to *make fast*, so that there shall be no tossing or overturning. The 'strengthen' recalls Christ's commission to Peter himself, the commission which he was discharging by this very writing, 'When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren' (Luke xxii. 32). Some have supposed the terms in which Peter, with a confidence touched with emotion, rapidly unfolds what God may be trusted to do, to be all figures drawn from the one conception of the Church as a building, the 'house' already noticed in chap. ii. 5. Bengel speaks of them as 'language worthy of *Peter* (a rock),' and gives the points briefly thus—*perfect*—so that no *defect* can remain in you; *stablish*—so that nothing shall *shake* you; *strengthen*—so that ye may overcome every opposing force.

Ver. 11. **To him be (or, is) the dominion unto the ages. Amen.** A doxology similar to that in chap. iv. 11, but briefer. The longer version of the A. V. is not sustained by sufficient evidence.

CHAPTER V. 12–14.

Closing Explanations and Salutations.

12 BY Silvanus, a[1] faithful brother unto you,[2] (as I [a]suppose,[3]) I have[4] written[5] [b]briefly, [c]exhorting, and testifying that
13 this is the true grace of God wherein ye [d]stand.[6] The Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you,[7] [e]saluteth you;
14 and *so doth* Marcus[8] my [f]son. Greet[9] ye one another with a [g]kiss of charity.[10] [h]Peace be with you all that are in [i]Christ Jesus.[11] Amen.

[a] Rom. viii. 18; Phil. iii. 13; Heb. xi. 19.
[b] Eph. iii. 3.
[c] Lu. iii. 18; 1 Cor. iv. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 2, etc.
[d] Rom. v. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 1.
[e] Rom. xvi. 3, 16, etc.; Col. iv. 10, 15, etc.
[f] 1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 2.
[g] Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 Thes. v. 26.
[h] 3 Jo. 15.
[i] Rom. viii. 1, xvi. 7; 2 Cor. v. 17.

[1] the [2] *omit* unto you [3] as I account him [4] *literally*, I wrote
[5] *add* unto you [6] *read rather*, the true grace of God; in which stand ye
[7] *literally*, She that is in Babylon, co-elect, saluteth you [8] Mark
[9] Salute [10] *or*, love [11] *read simply*, in Christ; *omit also the* Amen

Certain details are now appended as to the composition and transmission of the Epistle. The object with which it has been written is stated with great brevity and point. Salutations then follow which have an important bearing on the origin of the Epistle, and have been the subject of much debate. The conclusion is given in the form of a benediction which has a simplicity peculiar to itself.

Ver. 12. **By Silvanus.** In all probability this is the well-known friend and fellow-labourer of Paul, known as Silas in the Book of Acts, but as Silvanus in the Pauline Epistles (1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 19). He is noticed first (Acts xv. 22) as one of the 'chief men among the brethren' in the Church of Jerusalem, sent as such along with Paul, Barnabas, and Judas Barsabas with the letter from the convention of apostles and elders to Antioch; next as a prophet exhorting 'the brethren with many words' (Acts xv. 32); then, on his return from Antioch, as chosen by Paul to be his companion on his second missionary journey (Acts xv. 40, xvii. 40); next, as left behind with Timothy at Berœa, while Paul went on to Athens (Acts xvii. 14); and, finally, as again with Paul at Corinth (Acts xviii. 5). From Acts xvii. 15 we gather that along with Timothy he received instructions to join Paul at Athens. But we have no information either as to the carrying out of these instructions, or as to the way in which he became associated with Peter. It is possible that he went with Timothy from Athens to Thessalonica (1 Thess. iii. 2). As a missionary of the Cross he was most familiar with the Asiatic churches, and knew well the territories now addressed by Peter. The '*by* Silvanus' does not necessarily imply that he acted as Peter's amanuensis. As in the subscriptions to some of the Pauline Epistles (*Romans* and *Corinthians*), and as in the longer form 'by the hand of' (Acts xv. 23, where the A. V. translates it simply '*by* them'), the phrase may designate the bearer of the Epistle.—**the faithful brother, as I account him.** The A. V. is at fault here both in giving '*a* faithful brother,' and in rendering 'as I *suppose*.' The verb indicates not a mere *supposition* in the ordinary sense of the word, but (as in Rom. iii. 28, vi. 11, viii. 18; Heb. xi. 19) a settled persuasion, an assured judgment. Some indeed attach this 'as I suppose' to the next clause, as if it expressed Peter's opinion of the brevity of his own letter. It belongs, however, to the present clause, and expresses Peter's view of what he had himself found Silvanus to be. This comrade of Paul was a suitable messenger, both because he was known to the churches addressed, and because he had been to Peter as faithful a brother as he had been to Paul. The 'unto you' is so connected by the A. V. as to denote the persons to whom Silvanus proved himself faithful. It belongs, however, rather to the verb, and indicates the persons to whom the Epistle was addressed.—**I wrote unto you.** Where we in English would say 'I write' or 'I have written,' regarding the yet unfinished letter as still in the writer's hands, the Greeks might say 'I wrote,' the letter which was being finished being regarded from the view-point of the recipient who was to read it as a completed thing. So here, although Peter says, literally, 'I wrote' (not 'I have written,' as in A. V.), he refers to the present Epistle, and not, as some have supposed, to the Second Epistle, or to another which is now lost. For similar instances see Gal. vi. 11; Philem. 19, 21; Heb. xiii. 22; and possibly, although not quite so certainly, 1 John ii. 14, 21, 26, v. 15. —**briefly**; literally, 'through few (words),' a formula analogous to that in Heb. xiii. 22. As compared with Epistles like those to the *Romans*, *Corinthians*, and *Hebrews*, this Epistle would not be considered a 'brief' one. But in view of the weight and variety of topics touched on, and as compared with what could be conveyed by oral discourse, it might well seem to the writer that all that he had been able to say, in the letter which he was now closing, was a very limited statement indeed. At most points, too, the Epistle is remarkable for its conciseness and condensation.

—**exhorting**: on the force of this verb see on chap. ii. 11.—**and testifying**: the verb used here is a compound form of the usual verb. This is its only occurrence in the N. T. Some hold that it should be rendered 'giving *additional* testimony,' as if Peter meant that what he had done was simply to add his own testimony to what the readers had already been instructed in by Paul and Silas. The compound verb, however, gives the same idea, only with greater strength, as the simple verb. The two participles are not to be taken to refer (as they are understood by de Wette, etc.) to separate portions of the Epistle. We cannot say that so much of it is *exhortation*, and so much of it *testimony*. It is throughout an Epistle of the twofold character expressed by these terms, its exhortations rise upon the solid basis of its testimony to the grace of God, and its testimony is determined with a view to the practical statement of duty.—**that this is the true grace of God**. The 'grace of God' here means much the same as 'this grace' in Rom. v. 1. What is in view, therefore, is not the '*state* of grace,' as contrasted with the state of nature. Neither is it the pure preaching of the gospel as contrasted with a false gospel or erroneous doctrinal teaching. It is the *gift* of grace whereof God had made them possessors through the preaching of the Gospel. Peter affirms, therefore, that what they had come to know and enjoy through the Gospel was no imaginary or supposititious thing, but real grace, God's own grace, which they might rely on without hesitation in spite of all their sufferings, and by which they ought firmly to abide. He regards the readers as already *in* that grace. But by whose means they had first been introduced to it, he does not specify. So far, however, as they had been introduced by Paul into 'this grace' of which Peter had been writing, Peter sets the seal of his own testimony to that form of the Gospel which Paul had made known to them, and by which they had become what they now were.—**in which stand**; or, as the R. V. amplifies it, **stand ye fast therein**. Thus we must read, on the authority of the best documents and editors, instead of the 'wherein ye stand' of the A. V. The charge, too, is of the form (literally = *into* which stand ye) which recognizes the entrance into the grace, and enjoins its sedulous retention. It is therefore 'a short and earnest exhortation, containing in it in fact the pith of what has been said by way of exhortation in the whole Epistle' (Alford).

Ver. 13. **The church in Babylon, co-elect, saluteth you.** The original runs simply 'the co-elect one in Babylon saluteth you,' or, as the R. V. renders it, 'she that is in Babylon, elect together with *you*, saluteth you.' Hence some good expositors, including Bengel and Alford, are of opinion that Peter names in this way his own wife, (to whom there is also supposed to be a reference in 1 Cor. ix. 5), as uniting with him in these greetings. Others think that some notable Christian woman belonging to the Babylonian church itself, is in view. The grounds on which this interpretation is urged are such as these: the unlikelihood of the whole Christian community, designated as it is with so strange an indefiniteness, being united in these parting salutations with a single individual, who is distinctly described by his name Mark; the probability that in an Epistle addressed to 'elect strangers' individually, and not to churches named as such, the 'co-elect one' should also be an individual; the necessity of supplying a term, viz. *church*, which nowhere occurs in the Epistle itself. The great majority of interpreters, however, including Luther, Calvin, and most of those of our own day, prefer the other view; and there is an obvious fitness in giving the greetings of the Christian community, within whose bounds Peter was at present resident, as the greetings of a church which, though widely separated geographically, was 'co-elect' with those 'elect sojourners' in other countries to whom he was writing. One of our two oldest manuscripts, the Sinaitic, indeed inserts the word 'church,' as does also the Vulgate. Wycliffe gives 'the church that is gathered,' etc.; Tyndale, 'the companions of your election,' etc.; Cranmer, 'the congregation of them which at Babylon are companions of your election.' The A. V. follows the Genevan and the Rhemish. But what is to be understood by *Babylon* here? Some few, including Vitringa and our own Pearson, have supposed the place in view to be an Egyptian Babylon, a military station mentioned by Strabo. Others have imagined it to be a mystical name for Jerusalem, or for the house in which the apostles met on the day of Pentecost. Passing over these eccentric opinions, however, we have to choose between two views, namely, that which takes the term literally and as designating the well-known Babylon on the Euphrates, and that which takes it figuratively and as designating Rome. The latter is undoubtedly a very ancient opinion. It was held, for example, by Jerome, Clement of Alexandria, and others of the Fathers. It is carried back indeed by the historian Eusebius to Papias of Hierapolis in the second century. It has been the prevalent Roman Catholic interpretation, but has also won the adhesion of Reformers like Luther, and of not a few eminent Protestant exegetes belonging to our own time, *e.g.* Hofmann, Ewald, Schott, etc. In favour of this allegorical interpretation it is urged that there are other occurrences of *Babylon* in the N. T. as a mystical name for Rome (Rev. xiv. 8, xviii. 2, 10); that it is in the highest degree unlikely that Peter should have made the Assyrian Babylon his residence or missionary centre, especially in view of a statement by Josephus indicating that the Emperor Claudius had expelled the Jews from that city and neighbourhood; and that tradition connects Peter with Rome, but not with Babylon. The fact, however, that the word is mystically used in a mystical book like the Apocalypse,—a book, too, which is steeped in the spirit and terminology of the Old Testament, is no argument for the mystical use of the word in writings of a different type. The allegorical interpretation becomes still less likely when it is observed that other geographical designations in this Epistle (chap. i 1) have undoubtedly the literal meaning. The tradition itself, too, is uncertain. The statement in Josephus does not bear all that it is made to bear. There is no reason to suppose that, at the time when this Epistle was written, the city of Rome was currently known among Christians as Babylon. On the contrary, wherever it is mentioned in the N. T., with the single exception of the Apocalypse (and even there it is distinguished as 'Babylon *the great*'), it gets its usual

name, Rome. So far, too, from the Assyrian Babylon being practically in a deserted state at this date, there is very good ground for believing that the Jewish population (not to speak of the heathen) of the city and vicinity was very considerable. For these and other reasons a succession of distinguished interpreters and historians, from Erasmus and Calvin on to Neander, Weiss, Reuss, Huther, etc., have rightly held by the literal sense.—**and so doth Mark my son.** Bengel and a few others think that this Mark was Peter's own son according to the flesh. But in all probability he is affectionately designated in this way because he was Peter's spiritual son in the faith. The Mark referred to, therefore, appears to be the well-known John Mark, the writer of the Second Gospel, of whom we read in Acts xii. 12, 25, xiii. 5, 13, xv. 37, 39, Col. iv. 10, Philem. 24, 2 Tim. iv. 11, and who has been connected by tradition with Peter as his companion and interpreter. It was to the house of Mary, the mother of this Mark, that Peter repaired on his deliverance from prison (Acts xii. 12). The old friendship, therefore, is found still alive after a long and changeful interval. It was this Mark who was the occasion of the sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas, which is noticed in Acts xv. When these two set out on their second missionary tour, Barnabas desired to take his kinsman (Col. iv. 10) Mark along with them, as had been the case when they started on their first missionary journey. Paul resolutely refused, however, to accede to this in consequence of Mark's having left them during the former tour (it may be under the influence of Peter's vacillation, Gal. ii. 13) at the Pamphylian Perga (Acts xiii. 13), and gone back to his mother's house at Jerusalem. The result was that Paul and Barnabas separated, the latter taking Mark with him and proceeding again to Cyprus, the former associating Silas with him and journeying through Syria and Cilicia (Acts xv. 39–41). Here, however, in Babylon, the scene of so much decayed greatness, Silvanus and Mark are found together once more, acting along with Peter, the friend of Paul. Near the end of his career Paul bears witness to Timothy that Mark was 'profitable to him for the ministry' (2 Tim. iv. 11). 'Peter here,' says Wordsworth, 'joins Mark with Silas, who had once been preferred in his room. So may all wounds be healed, and all differences cease in the Church of Christ. So may all falterers be recovered, and Christian charity prevail, and God's glory be magnified in all persons and in all things, through Jesus Christ.'

Ver. 14. **Salute one another with** (or, *by means of*) **a kiss of love.** What Peter speaks of here as the 'kiss of love' is always spoken of by Paul as the 'holy kiss' (Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 Thess. v. 26). The Christian Fathers, too, speak of it as the 'kiss of peace,' or the 'kiss in the Lord.' The practice of saluting with a kiss was as common in the ancient East, and specially among the Jews, as is the custom of saluting with hand-shaking in the modern West. This gave rise to the Christian practice, which was a token of brotherly love, and had 'the specific character of Christian consecration' (see Meyer on 1 Cor. xvi. 20). These remarks of Richard Hooker on apostolic practices which are not to be held binding, are worth notice:—'Whereas it is the error of the common multitude to consider only what hath been of old, and if the same were well, to see whether it still continue; if not, to condemn that presently which is, and never to search upon what ground or consideration the change might grow; such rudeness cannot be in you so well borne with, whom learning and judgment hath enabled more soundly to discern how far the times of the Church and the orders thereof may alter without offence. True it is, the ancienter, the better ceremonies of religion are; howbeit, not absolutely true and without exception; but true only so far forth as those different ages do agree in the state of those things, for which at the first those rites, orders, and ceremonies were instituted. In the Apostles' times that was harmless, which being now revived would be scandalous; as their *oscula sancta*. Those feasts of charity, which being instituted by the Apostles, were retained in the Church long after, are not now thought anywhere needful' (*Eccl. Polity*, Preface, iv. 4).—**Peace to you all that are in Christ.** The closing words 'in Christ' (which reading must be accepted instead of the 'in Christ *Jesus*' of the A. V.) are peculiarly Pauline in tone. Paul himself, however, is not in the habit of defining the subjects of his benedictions by that phrase, although it is elsewhere in frequent use by him. The benediction itself somewhat resembles that in Eph. vi. 24. Elsewhere Paul usually gives 'grace' where Peter has 'peace' here. The 'Amen' of the A. V. is insufficiently supported.

THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF

PETER.

CHAPTER I. 1, 2.

Address and Salutation.

1 SIMON[1] PETER, a [a]servant[2] and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have[3] [b]obtained like precious faith with us [c]through[4] the [d]righteousness of God, and our [e]Saviour
2 Jesus Christ: [b] [f]Grace and [f]peace be [g]multiplied unto you through[4] the [h]knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

[a] Rom. i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Tit. i. 1; Jas. i. 1; Jude 1.
[b] Acts i. 17. Cf. also Lu. i. 9; Jo. xix. 14.
[c] Rom. v. 9, xv. 13.

[d] Rom. i. 17, iii. 5, 21, 22, x. 3; Jas. i. 20. [e] Ver. 11; ch. ii. 20, iii. 2, 18; 2 Tim. i. 20: Tit. i. 4, ii. 13, iii. 6
[f] See refs. at 1 Pet. i. 2. [g] Mat. xxiv. 12: Acts vi. 1, 7, vii. 17, ix. 31, xii. 24; 2 Cor. ix. 10; Heb. vi. 14; 1 Pet. i. 2; Jude 2. [h] Vers. 3, 8; ch. ii. 20; Rom. i. 28, iii. 20, x. 2; Eph. i. 17, iv. 13; Phil. i. 9; Col. i. 9, 10, ii. 2, iii. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 25, iii. 7; Tit. i. 1; Philem. 6; Heb. x. 26.

[1] *or perhaps*, Symeon [2] bond-servant [3] *omit* have [4] in
[5] of our God and the Saviour Jesus Christ, *or*, *according to the R.V.*, of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ

There is a marked difference between the opening of this Second Epistle and that of the First. The one inscription, indeed, is not less remarkable than the other for wealth of thought and tenderness of feeling. The benediction, too, with which the readers of this Epistle are greeted, has the same peculiarity of expression as the former. But there is more of the personal now in the description of the writer, and more of the catholic in the description of the readers. The writer's name is given with greater familiarity. His official title is given with greater fulness, and more in the Pauline form. The local designation of the readers is omitted, and they are described simply in respect of what they are by grace. This may be due to the fact that the former letter and the oral communications of its bearer, Silvanus, had brought the author into closer relations with the recipients. In contents and in phraseology the Introduction has also a character of its own. It points to Gentile Christians as the persons immediately addressed. It starts, too, with at least two ideas which bulk largely in the body of the Epistle, namely, that of spiritual *knowledge* as opposed to what is taught by seductive pretenders, and the *lordship* of Christ as opposed to the licence which *despises government* and *speaks evil of dignities*.

Ver. 1. **Simon Peter.** In the First Epistle the writer designates himself simply by the new name of grace, *Peter*, which he received from Christ. Here he gives the combined name which is found occasionally in the Gospels (Luke v. 8; John xiii. 6, xx. 2, xxi. 15; cf. also Matt. iv. 18, x. 2; Mark iii. 16; Luke vi. 14; Acts x. 5, xi. 13). The change in the personal designation of the author has been held by some to betray the spuriousness of the Epistle. By others it has been taken as a clear, though minor, witness to its genuineness. It can scarcely be said to have much weight either way; although it may go so far to establish the independence of the composition. It would certainly be less likely that a forger should adopt this style of address, than that he should make it identical with that used by the writer for whom he gives himself out. Some, again (*e.g.* Besser), think the change due to the fact that the full name, Simon Peter, has a 'kind of testamentary form,' and suits one who feels the end of his life near. Others (*e.g.* Plumptre) explain it as occurring perhaps simply through a change of amanuensis. The reason, however, may be that the writer has it in view to emphasize in the present connection his own Jewish origin, and enlist sympathetic attention to his admonitions, by exhibiting at the outset the common platform of grace on which Jewish Christians like himself and Gentile Christians like his readers stood. This becomes clearer if we read *Symeon* instead of *Simon*. The best ancient authorities vary so much between these two forms that it

is difficult to say which is to be preferred. The form *Simon* is used both by Christ (Matt. xvii. 25) and by Peter's fellow-believers (Luke xxiv. 34). Occasionally it seems as if Jesus fell back upon that name as the old name of nature, which excited humbling thoughts of the past in the mind of the Apostle (cf. Mark xiv. 37; Luke xxii. 31; John xxi. 15, 16, 17). *Symeon* is the distinctively Hebraic or Aramaic form, the one probably in familiar use among the Jews themselves. To Peter himself it is given only once elsewhere, viz. by James, the spokesman of the Jerusalem Convention (Acts xv. 14). In the N. T. it is the form used in the case of the aged saint who received the infant Jesus into his arms in the temple (Luke ii. 25, 34), in that of the son of Juda (Luke iii. 30), in that of Niger (Acts xiii. 1), and in that of the Israelite tribe (Rev. vii 7). In the Greek translation of the O. T. it is regularly employed as the name of the patriarch Simeon.—**bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.** The *official* designation. It differs from its parallel in the former Epistle in setting the general title, which covers all kinds of office or service, before the definite title which marks the particular dignity of office held by Peter. The combined designation, in this form, is peculiar to the present Epistle. It most resembles that adopted by Paul in Rom. i. 1 and Tit. i. 1. In his other Epistles Paul styles himself either simply 'servant' (Phil. i. 1), or simply 'apostle' (1 Cor. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1; Gal. i. 1; Eph. i. 1; Col. i. 1; 1 Tim. i. 1; 2 Tim. i. 1); and in the Epistles of James and Jude 'servant' is the one title employed. It is questioned whether the term has here the official sense or the non-official. On the ground of the general application of the word 'servant' or 'bond-servant' in such passages as Rom. vi. 22, Eph. vi. 6, etc., it is argued that here too it expresses nothing more than dependence on Christ, devotion to His cause, and readiness to serve Him as any Christian may serve Him. In the N. T., however, the word occurs not only as the title used in inscriptions, but also in connections where it seems interchangeable with the term 'minister' (Col. i. 7, iv. 7, 12). In the O. T., too, the title 'servant of Jehovah' is a familiar official description (*e.g.* Josh. i. 1, xxiv. 29; Jer. xxix. 19; Isa. xlii. 1, etc.); while Moses is designated distinctively the 'servant of God' (1 Chron. vi. 49). Hence it is most probably intended here to express the general idea of office, of which the apostleship was a special and distinguishing instance. 'It has been also properly remarked that, as the expression, servant of Christ, implies implicit obedience and subjection, it supposes the Divine authority of the Redeemer. That is, we find the Apostle denying that he was the servant of men, rejecting all human authority as it regards matters of faith and duty, and yet professing the most absolute subjection of conscience and reason to the authority of Jesus Christ' (Hodge on Rom. i. 1).—**to them that obtained like precious faith with us.** From chap. iii. 1 we may perhaps infer that the Epistle was meant, in the first instance at least, for the persons addressed in the former Epistle. They are designated here, however, neither by their territorial distribution nor by their election, but by their community with others in faith. It is possible that by the 'faith' here we are to understand faith in the objective sense, the deposit of truth, the sum of the things believed. So it is taken by not a few excellent interpreters (Huther, Alford, Wiesinger, etc.), who suppose it borne out by the objective use of the term 'truth' in ver. 12, and the similar use of the term 'faith' in Jude 3. The subjective sense, however, seems more in accordance with the statement on the subject of the faith of the Gentiles made by Peter himself before the convention at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 9). It is also more in place here, where the writer proceeds at once to deal with the experience of the readers and their duty to grow in grace. It is therefore of the *grace* of faith in Christ that Peter speaks. And of this he affirms first that it came to them as a gift of God. This verb 'obtained' is one which occurs again only thrice in the N. T. (Luke i. 9; John xix. 24; Acts i. 17), in which last passage Peter himself is the speaker. It means properly to have by *lot* or *assignment*. It is put in the simple past ('obtained,' rather than '*have* obtained'), the gift of grace which brought with it this new belief being regarded as a thing definitely bestowed at a former crisis in their life. The faith in possession of which they were thus placed, neither by their own power nor of their own right, is affirmed secondly to be for that reason 'equally precious,' or 'of like worth,' with that of others like the writer himself. This compound adjective, 'like-precious,' occurs only here. It may be compared, however, with the repeated appearance of the idea of *preciousness* in the former Epistle (1 Pet. i. 7, 19, ii. 4, 6, 7). The A. V. follows the felicitous rendering of Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan. Wycliffe gives 'the even faith.' The Rhemish not less unhappily translates it 'equal faith.' But what is asserted is not the possession of the same measure of faith, but the possession of a faith which, by whomsoever enjoyed, has the same value in the sight of Him from whom it comes as a gift of grace. The persons referred to in the phrase 'with us' are not the *apostles* as such, but the class of Christians, Jewish-Christians to wit, to whom the writer himself belonged. There is nothing in the New Testament to indicate the existence of ideas which made it necessary to assert that with God the faith of ordinary believers was not inferior in worth to that of apostles. But there is much to show (cf. Acts xi. 17, xv. 9–11, etc.) how alien it was to primitive Christian thought to regard Gentile Christians as occupying in grace the self-same platform with Christians gathered out of the ancient Church of God.—**in the righteousness.** The 'through' of the A. V. is an inexact rendering. The preposition used points to that (the sphere, *e.g.*, or the spirit) in which a thing is done. The term 'righteousness' is not to be diluted into 'goodness,' or transformed into 'faithfulness.' Neither has it here the theological sense of *justifying righteousness*, the gift of righteousness (Luther, etc.), or imputed righteousness. That is a Pauline rather than a Petrine use. It is inconsistent, too, with the ascription of this righteousness both to God and to Christ. Nor, again, can the term be taken as equivalent to the *state of justification* (Schott, etc.). For this would represent the faith as coming by righteousness, instead of the righteousness as coming by faith. Other glosses upon the word, *e.g.* the righteous life of conformity to God's will (Brückner), the *kingdom* of righteousness (Dietlein), are still less in place. The only sense that will suit the

context (where the equality of Jew and Gentile in respect of faith is in view) is the broad sense of the rectitude, or righteous *impartiality*, of God and Christ. This, too, is an idea entirely characteristic of Peter. Compare his statement of the absence of all respect of persons with God in 1 Pet. i. 17, and his assertion of the same truth in connection with the admission of the Gentiles (Acts xi. 34). The phrase, therefore, is to be connected neither with the 'faith,' as if the faith affirmed was a faith in the righteousness of God; nor with the 'like-precious,' as if Peter meant that the faith of Gentile Christians had the same worth with that of Jewish Christians in the matter of a justified state or righteous life. It goes immediately with the 'obtained,' and expresses the fact that this faith became theirs by the gift of Him with whom there is no favouritism, no making of arbitrary distinctions between class and class.—**of our God and the Saviour Jesus Christ.** It is a question whether Jesus Christ is simply associated here with God, or is identified as both God and Saviour. The old English Versions prior to the A. V. adopted the latter idea, rendering not 'God and our Saviour,' but 'our God and Saviour.' The R. V. adheres to this in its text, but prudently inserts the rendering of the A. V. in its margin. The decision turns upon the application of a nice principle in the use of the Greek article, namely, that when two nouns of the same case, and under the rule of a single article prefixed to the former, are united by 'and,' they describe one and the same object. Instances of this are seen in the designations of Christ in ver. 11 and chap. iii. 18. Grammatically this principle might seem to apply very distinctly to the present case, and so it has been understood by many interpreters, including Schott, Hofmann, Dietlein, Wordsworth, etc. The last-named expositor argues further, that a declaration of Christ's Divinity was very pertinent here, because the Epistle 'was designed to repel the errors of those who separated *Jesus* from *Christ*, and *denied the Lord that bought them*, and rejected the doctrine of His Divinity.' The rule is subject, however, to certain checks which make its application here, as also in Tit. ii. 13, somewhat doubtful. Peter does not elsewhere call Christ directly *God*, although he repeatedly names Him *Lord*. The term *God* is nowhere attached immediately to Christ, or Jesus Christ, as is the case with *Lord* in the phrase 'the Lord Christ,' 'the Lord Jesus Christ,' 'our Lord Jesus Christ.' In the very next sentence, too, Peter distinguishes the two subjects, *God* and *Jesus our Lord*. It is precarious, therefore, to insist upon the grammatical principle here, and so the larger number of interpreters (Calvin, Huther, Alford, Fronmüller, Wiesinger, Lumby, Mason, etc.) hold that two subjects are in view here, God the Father and Jesus Christ the Saviour, although Peter speaks of a righteousness of action which belongs to both.

Ver. 2. **Grace to you and peace be multiplied.** So far the opening benediction is exactly the same as in 1 Pet. i. 2; see note there.—**in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.** This addition to the formula adopted in the previous Epistle is in admirable harmony with the scope of the letter. It defines the conditions on which this increase of grace and peace is suspended. These blessings will abound in the readers only as the readers themselves abide and advance in Divine knowledge. The strong, compound term for 'knowledge' is used here, which meets us so often in Paul's Epistles, particularly in the Pastoral Epistles and those of the Captivity. How characteristic of Paul the use of this word is, appears from these occurrences—Rom. i. 28, iii. 20, x. 2; Eph. i. 17, iv. 13; Phil. i. 9; Col. i. 9, 10, ii. 2, iii. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 25, iii. 7; Tit. i. 1; Philem. 6. It is almost equally characteristic, however, of the present Epistle (chap. i. 2, 3, 8, ii. 20). Elsewhere it occurs only in Hebrews (chap. x. 26). It means more than simple *acknowledgment*. It denotes an intenser, more complete and intuitive knowledge than is expressed by the simple noun. At times it gives the idea of the intimate recognition which love takes of its object. 'It is bringing me,' says Culverwell, 'better acquainted with a thing I knew before; a more exact viewing of an object that I saw before afar off' (see Trench, *sub voce*). This intimate 'knowledge' is also defined as the knowledge not only of *God*, but of *Jesus our Lord*; because, as Calvin suggests, it is only by knowing the latter that we can rightly know the former; cf. John xvii. 3. The phrase 'Jesus our Lord' occurs only here and in Rom. iv. 24. This spiritual knowledge, therefore, which brings us into loving acquaintance with God Himself through Jesus our Lord is exhibited as the secret of grace and peace, and is at once opposed here, at the outset of the Epistle, to that unspiritual, pretentious teaching which seems to have given itself out as the perfect knowledge within the circles addressed by Peter. It is possible that the Apostle of the Circumcision had now to cope with the same boastful, vapid, and unpractical speculations which Paul contends with in his Epistles to the Colossians and Timothy.

CHAPTER I. 3-11.

Growth in Spiritual Character recommended on the ground of the Endowment of Grace, and as the Security against Falling.

3 ACCORDING as[1] his [a]divine power hath given unto us[2] all things that *pertain* unto life and [b]godliness, through the [c]knowledge of him that hath [d]called us[3] to glory and
4 [e]virtue:[4] Whereby are given unto[5] us exceeding great and [f]precious [g]promises,[6] that by these you might be[7] [h]partakers of the divine nature, having [i]escaped the [k]corruption that is
5 in the world through[8] [l]lust. And besides this,[9] giving[10] all [m]diligence, [n]add to your faith [e]virtue;[11] and to[12] virtue,
6 [o]knowledge; and to knowledge, [p]temperance;[13] and to
7 temperance, [q]patience;[14] and to patience,[15] [r]godliness; and to[16] godliness, [s]brotherly kindness;[16] and to brotherly kind-
8 ness, [t]charity.[17] For if these things [u]be in you, and [w]abound, they [x]make you that ye shall neither be [y]barren nor [z]unfruit-
9 ful[18] in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But[19] he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off,[20] and hath forgotten that he was [a]purged[21] from his [b]old sins.
10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give [c]diligence[22] to make your [d]calling and [e]election [f]sure: for if ye do these things,
11 ye shall never [g]fall.[23] For so an [h]entrance shall be [i]ministered unto you [k]abundantly[24] into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

[a] Acts xvii. 29; Job xxviii. 3.
[b] Vers. 6, 7; ch. iii. 11; Acts iii. 12; 1 Tim. ii. 2; 2 Tim. iii. 5; Tit. i. 2; Isa. xi. 2.
[c] See refs. at ver. 2.
[d] See refs. at 1 Pet. i. 15.
[e] Ver. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 9.
[f] See refs. at 1 Pet. i. 19.
[g] Ch. iii. 13.
[h] 1 Pet. v. 1, etc.
[i] Ch. ii. 18, 20.
[k] Ch. ii. 12, 19; Rom. viii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 42, 50; Gal. vi. 8; Col. ii. 22.
[l] See refs. at 1 Pet. i. 14.
[m] Rom. xii. 8, 11; Jude 3, etc.
[n] Ver. 11; 2 Cor. ix. 10; Gal. iii. 5; Col. ii. 19; 2 Pet. i. 5.
[o] See refs. on ver. 3.
[p] 1 Pet. iii. 7.
[q] Acts xxiv. 25; Gal. v. 23.
[r] Lu. viii. 15; Rom. ii. 7; v. 3, 4, viii. 25, xv. 4, 5; 2 Cor. i. 6, vi. 4, xii. 12; Col. i. 11; 1 Thes. i. 3; 2 Thes. i. 4, iii. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 10; Tit. ii. 2; Heb. x. 36, xii. 1; Jas. i. 3, 4, v. 11; Rev. i. 9, ii. 2, 3, 19, iii. 10, xiii. 10, xiv. 12.
[s] See refs. at ver. 3.
[t] Rom. xii. 10; 1 Thes. iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 1; 1 Pet. i. 22.
[u] 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 3, 8, 13, etc.
[w] Acts iii. 6, iv. 37, xxviii. 7.
[x] Rom. v. 20, vi. 1; 2 Cor. iv. 15; Phil. iv. 17, etc.
[y] Mat. xxiv. 45, 47, xxv. 21, 23; Lu. xii. 14, 42, 44; Acts vi. 3, vii. 10, 27, 35, xvii. 15; Rom. v. 19; Tit. i. 5; Heb. ii. 7, v. 1, vii. 28, viii. 3; Jas. iii. 6, iv. 4.
[z] Mat. xii. 36, xx. 3, 6; 1 Tim. v. 13; Tit. i. 12; Jas. ii. 20.
[a] Mk. i. 44; Lu. ii. 22, v. 14; Jo. ii. 6, iii. 25; Heb. i. 3.
[b] Mat. xi. 21; Mk. xv. 44; Lu. x. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 19; Heb. i. 1; Jude 4.
[c] Gal. ii. 10; Eph. iv. 3; 1 Thes. ii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 15, etc.
[d] Rom. xi. 29; 1 Cor. i. 26, vii. 20; Eph. i. 18, iv. 1, 4; Phil. iii. 14; 2 Thes. i. 11; 2 Tim. i. 9; Heb. iii. 1.
[e] Acts ix. 15; Rom. ix. 11, xi. 5, 7, 28; 1 Thes. i. 4.
[f] Rom. xi. 29; Eph. i. 18; Phil. iii. 14; Heb. iii. 1.
[g] Rom. xi. 11; Jas. ii. 10, iii. 12.
[h] Acts xiii. 24; 1 Thes. i. 9, ii. 1; Heb. x. 19.
[i] See refs. at ver. 5.
[k] Col. iii. 16; 1 Tim. vi. 17; Tit. iii. 6.

[1] *rather*, Seeing that, *as in R. V.*
[2] *or*, hath gifted us with
[3] *rather*, that called us
[4] through glory and virtue, *or*, by his own glory and virtue
[5] *rather*, he has given
[6] *or*, the precious and very great promises
[7] *rather*, become
[8] *literally*, in
[9] *rather*, And for this very cause then, *or*, *as the R. V. gives it*, Yea, and for this very cause
[10] applying on your part, *or*, applying besides
[11] *rather*, furnish in your faith virtue
[12] in the
[13] in the knowledge, self-control
[14] in the self-control, patient endurance
[15] in the patient endurance
[16] *or*, brotherly-love
[17] *or*, in the brotherly-love, love
[18] *literally*, These things subsisting in you, and multiplying, make you neither idle nor yet unfruitful in relation to
[19] For
[20] short-sighted, *or*, *as the R. V. puts it*, seeing only what is near
[21] having forgotten the cleansing
[22] Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence
[23] stumble
[24] *rather*, for thus shall be richly furnished you the entrance

The writer starts at once, and in a somewhat abrupt and nervous fashion, with the great theme of advance in the spiritual life. He regards this as essential. He takes it for granted that it can be made good only from the standpoint of faith. He exhibits in detail the process of such an advance, and urges it by considerations drawn both from the advantage which it carries with it and the peril and loss involved in its neglect. We can the better understand why he should insist with such rugged force upon the necessity of a constant increase in gracious attainment, and that specially in relation to the knowledge of God, if we are right in supposing that he had in view a spurious kind of knowledge, or *gnosis*, which developed in the next century into the heresy of the so-called *Gnostics* or 'knowing ones.' For that party pretended to reach a religious height from which they looked down in proud pity upon the ordinary life of faith and the ordinary requirements of a growth in grace. Peter uses words as lofty as the loftiest language of that party. He speaks of the destiny of the Christian as nothing short of participation in the Divine nature. He describes in the strongest terms the grandeur and affluence of the gifts conferred by Christ. But he makes both the magnitude and the intention of these gracious endowments the ground of his exhortation to aim at spiritual advance, and the reason why believers should practise all diligence. Though the style seems involved and the grammar irregular, the paragraph is distinguished by the rich elevation of its style, its dignified march, and the orderly progress of its argument.

Ver. 3. **Seeing that his divine power has gifted us.** This verse and the next are attached by the A. V. immediately to what precedes. They are thus made part of the opening benediction. This was once almost the accepted connection. It was retained by the great critic Lachmann, and it appears to be favoured by the punctuation which is adopted in the most recent critical edition of the original, namely, that by Westcott and Hort. Alford, too, holds that the connection with the former verse should not be broken, as it is characteristic of the writer of this Epistle 'to dilate further when the sense seems to have come to a close.' There is much, nevertheless, against this. The inscriptions of the Epistles are short, compact, and self-contained. That of the former Epistle of Peter is decidedly so. In a few of the Epistles (Hebrews, James, 1 John, 3 John) there is no introductory greeting, or at least no benediction. Where there is such, it closes the inscription. Even in the case of the Epistle to the Galatians, which might seem to be an exception to the general form, the longer inscription is concluded by a doxology. This being the general model of the inscriptions, it is better to connect vers. 3 and 4 with what follows. They thus lay the deep foundation for the exhortation, which follows in ver. 5. That foundation is the liberal grant of grace which believers have received from Him in whom they believe. The grant, too, is described at some length, as regards its source, its extent, the means of its attainment, the object with which it is bestowed. So Bengel conceives that in the present paragraph we have the truth which is enshrined in the Master's parable of the Virgins (Matt. xxv.) expounded without the parabolic form, the 3d and 4th verses dealing with the *flame*, that is to say, with that which is simply conferred by God without action on our side, and the subsequent verses dealing with the *oil*, that is to say, all that which we ourselves have to contribute in order to maintain, extend, and utilize the flame. The A. V., therefore, somewhat misses the point by its 'according as,' which gives the idea of a standard to which our efforts are to conform. What is intended is neither this, nor a mere explanation such as is supposed by some (*e.g.* Bengel, Mason) on the analogy of 2 Cor. v. 20, but the emphatic statement of a fact, which is thrown into the strongest relief at the outset. They had received a great endowment of grace, and this at once made them capable of acting out the lofty pattern of character immediately depicted, and laid them under obligation to do. Hence the opening phrase should be rendered 'considering that,' 'forasmuch as,' or (with the R. V.) 'seeing that.' The verb rendered 'given' in the A. V. is not the ordinary verb, but a richer form which may be translated 'gift' or 'grant.' It occurs only once again in the N. T., namely of Pilate's *grant* of the body of Jesus to Joseph (Mark xv. 45). The bestowal of this endowment of grace is ascribed to 'His Divine power.' Whose? *God's*, say some; *Christ's*, say others; while a third party say it is the power of *God and Jesus* in the oneness of their nature and activity. On the whole, the second view (which is that of Calvin, Huther, etc.) seems most likely. It would be somewhat superfluous to describe the power as *Divine*, if the Subject in view were God the Father. It is not superfluous, if the Subject in view is that 'Jesus our Lord' who was 'crucified in weakness' but also 'raised in power,' and who puts forth the 'power of His resurrection' (Phil. iii. 10) in the imparting of all needful gifts to His servants. This epithet 'Divine,' indeed, occurs only twice again in the N. T., namely in ver. 4 and in Acts xvii. 29. The power of Christ which works in behalf of Christians, secures for them this wealth of spiritual privilege only because it is a power of a *Divine* order.—**with all things pertaining to life and godliness.** The sense might perhaps be more adequately given thus—'with all things, to wit all those pertaining to life and godliness.' The grant is represented as a universal one, so far as these particular objects are concerned. By 'life and godliness' we are not to understand man's temporal interest on the one hand and his spiritual interest on the other. Both terms refer to the latter interest. As the subjoined statement shows, 'life' has here the wide sense of life truly so called, the eternal life which Christ (John xvii. 3) identifies with the knowledge of the only true God and Him whom He sent. The term for 'godliness' is one in which the original idea is that of reverence, or the fear of God. It is of somewhat peculiar usage in the N. T., being found nowhere but in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. ii. 2, iii. 16, iv. 7, 8, etc.), and on the lips of Peter (Acts iii. 12; 2 Pet. i. 3, 6, 7, iii. 11). It has a distinctively Old Testament tone. The two words, therefore, express two distinct things, the former denoting the new, inward condition of the believer, the latter the attitude toward God which corresponds with that condition. It is to be noticed, however, that what Peter describes believers to be gifted with is not the *life* and *godliness* themselves, but *all things pertaining* to these. The new 'life' itself is also a Divine gift. But that 'life' admits of being regarded under the aspect of a thing

appropriated and used by the recipient of it, as well as a thing communicated by grace. It is with the latter that Peter deals at present. Taking it for granted that the gift of life is there, he will have it understood that this is not to lie dormant, because the Divine power of Christ has furnished with the new life itself also all that is serviceable to our living it out for ourselves, and giving effect to it in a type of conduct ruled by the fear of God.—**through the knowledge of him who called us through glory and virtue.** The same intense term for 'knowledge' is used here as in ver. 2. The calling is given as belonging entirely to the past ('called,' not 'hath called'), the first definite introduction into Christ's kingdom being in view. The Person who 'called us' is in all probability *God;* although some (*e.g.* Schott) take *Christ* to be intended in the present instance, holding that at least occasionally, as in Rom. i. 6, the usual N. T. practice of ascribing the 'call' to God the Father is departed from. The A. V. is entirely in error in rendering the last clause '*to* glory and virtue.' In this it has followed the 'unto' of the Genevan; Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Rhemish rightly give 'by.' Otherwise the reading varies between two forms which have much the same sense, viz. 'through glory and virtue,' and 'by his own glory and virtue.' By the 'glory' we may understand the sum of God's revealed perfections. As to the term 'virtue,' see on 1 Pet. ii. 9, where it is used to express the *excellencies* of God. It occurs again in ver. 5 of this chapter, and in the N. T. its use is confined to the writings of Peter, with the single Pauline exception of Phil. iv. 8. In the Classics it denotes excellence, whether physical or mental. In the Greek Version of the O. T. it represents the Hebrew term for the *majesty* (Hab. iii. 3; Zech. vi. 13, etc.) and the *praise* (Isa. xlii. 8) of God. Here the combined terms appear to describe the Divine perfections both as *revealed* and as *efficient*. What is meant, therefore, is that this grant of 'all things serviceable for life and godliness,' which Christ's Divine power has secured for us, becomes actually ours only as we know the God whom Christ has declared, and who called us out of darkness by revealing His own gracious perfections and making them efficient in our case. There is a measure of resemblance to 1 Pet. i. 21, where it is said to be *by Christ* that we believe in God.

Ver. 4. **Whereby he has gifted us.** The verb is to be put thus, as already in ver. 3, rather than in the passive form, 'are given,' as the A. V. renders it. The 'whereby' may refer either to the 'all things' or to the 'glory and virtue,' more probably to the latter. The Person said here to 'gift us' is, according to some, the *Christ* whose Divine power has been already described as *gifting;* according to others (and this is on the whole more likely), it is the God who 'called us.'—**with the precious and exceedingly great promises.** What are we to understand by these? Some say the promises recorded in the O. T. Others say the promises uttered by Christ Himself, or more generally those promises about His Second Advent and the end of the world which are given in the N. T., and to which also reference is supposed to be made in chap. iii. 13. The term 'promise,' however, means at times not the *verbal* promise itself, but its fulfilment (comp. Luke xxiv. 49; Heb. ix. 15, x. 36, xi. 13, 39). This sense is supported here, too, by the particular word used (occurring only once again in the whole N. T., viz. in chap. iii. 13), which differs from the ordinary term in being of a more concrete form. The 'promises' in view, therefore, may be especially the two all inclusive fulfilments of God's engagements, namely, the Advent of Messiah (comp. Luke i. 67–75), and the gift of the Spirit (which is described as 'the promise of the Father,' Acts i. 4). And these are defined as 'exceeding great and precious,' or rather, in accordance with what is on the whole the better supported reading, as 'precious and exceeding (or very) great.' These two epithets combined exhibit the objects as at once indisputably real, and of the highest possible magnitude. The 'precious' (an epithet which meets us in more than one form also in the First Epistle, i. 7, 19, ii. 7) seems here to point to the fact that these 'promises' are more than *pleasing* words, and have been found indeed to be things tangible and of the most substantial worth. The clause as a whole, therefore, bears that by means of those same revealed and efficient perfections by which He called us, God has put us in actual possession of those incalculable bestowals of grace which are identified with the Coming of Christ and the gift of the Spirit.—**in order that through these ye might become partakers of the divine nature.** Some take the 'through these' to refer to the 'all things pertaining to life and godliness;' others connect it immediately with the 'glory and virtue.' It is most naturally referred, however, to the immediately preceding 'promises.' The sentence, therefore, states the object which God has had in view in gifting us with the endowments of grace which are bound up with the Coming of the promised Christ, and the outpouring of the promised Spirit. His object was that through these (for only through these was it possible) the servants of the flesh might have a new life and a new destiny. The verb is so put ('might become,' rather than either 'might *be*,' as in A. V., or '*may* become,' as in R. V.) as to imply that the participation in view is not a thing merely of the future, but realized so far in the present. The expression given to the life and destiny themselves is as singular as it is profound—'partakers of the (or perhaps *a*) Divine nature.' This phrase 'Divine nature' is peculiar to the present passage. It is not to be regarded as a mere synonym for 'justification,' 'regeneration,' or the 'mystical union.' On the other hand, it is not quite the same as the phrase 'the being of God.' As the phrase the 'nature of beasts' (comp. Jas. iii. 7) denotes the sum of all the qualities characteristic of the brute creation, strength, fierceness, etc.; and the phrase 'human nature' denotes the sum of the qualities distinctive of man, so the 'Divine nature' denotes the sum of the qualities, holiness, etc., which belong to God. What is meant, therefore, is a Divine order of moral nature, an inward life of a God-like constitution, participation in qualities which are in God, and which may be in us so far as His Spirit is in us. Not that the believer is *deified*, as some of the Fathers ventured to say and Mystics have at times vainly dreamed, nor that there is any essential identity between the human nature and the Divine; but that God, who created us at first in His own image, designs through the Incarnation of His Son to make us like Himself, as children may be like a father, putting on us

'the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness' (Eph. iv. 24; comp. also John i. 12).—**having escaped the corruption that is in the world in lust.** Luther, with some others, translates this 'if ye escape,' as if it expressed a condition on which participation in the Divine nature depended. It rather states, however, simply the other side of the Divine intention, and might be rendered 'escaping,' or, 'when ye escape.' The verb translated 'escaped' occurs only here and in chap. ii. 18, 20. It implies a complete rescue, and 'this is mentioned,' as Bengel justly observes, 'not so much as a duty towards, but as a blessing from, God, which accompanies our communion with Him.' The term 'corruption,' or 'destruction,' is one which occurs twice again in this Epistle (chap. ii. 12, 19; for the idea comp. also 1 Pet. i. 4, 18, 23, iii. 4). Outside this Epistle it is used only by Paul (Rom. viii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 45, 50; Gal. vi. 8; Col. ii. 22). It denotes the destroying, blighting principle of sin; which also is said to have the 'world' for its seat or sphere of operation, and 'lust' (on which see on 1 Pet. i. 14) for the element in which it moves, or perhaps, as the R. V. prefers, the instrument *by* which it works. Bengel notices the contrast between the *escape* and the *partaking*, and between the *corruption in the world in lust* and the *Divine nature*.

Ver. 5. **And for this very cause then.** The A. V. erroneously renders 'and beside this.' The formula does not introduce something which is to be added to the former statement, but makes the former statement the ground for what is next to be said. The R. V. renders it well by 'yea, and for this very cause.'—**applying on your side all diligence.** The idea of 'diligence' is conveyed by the term which means also 'zeal,' and is rendered 'earnest care' in 2 Cor. viii. 16. The verb, which is inadequately represented by the 'giving' of the A. V., is a rare compound form, of which this is the only New Testament instance. It is taken by some to mean 'edging in,' or 'bringing in modestly' (Bengel); by others, 'bringing in on the other hand' (Wiesinger, etc.). The idea, however, seems to be that of 'contributing on your side' (Huther, etc.), 'contributing what might seem to be superseded' (Hofmann), or 'applying besides' (Scott). In the Classics it expresses the bringing in of something *new or additional*, as *e.g.* the introduction of a new bill to amend an old law. Here it introduces what the readers have to do on their side, in response to, and in virtue of, that which Christ has done on His side. The fact that Christ's Divine power had so richly endowed them, and that God had privileged them to see the accomplished realities which had been the subjects of His promises, was not to be made an argument for anything else than strenuous effort on their part. It was to be the reason and motive for applying themselves with sedulous care to aims and exertions which the Divine gift might seem to have rendered unnecessary. 'Rest not satisfied, then, with a mere negative exertion, or with any low, fragmentary measure of accomplishment, but, co-operating to the full extent of the Divine purpose, go on unto perfection' (Lillie). —**furnish in your faith virtue.** The A. V. is entirely at fault with its rendering, 'add to your faith virtue,' in which also it unhappily followed Beza, and forsook the earlier English Versions. Wycliffe and the Rhemish give 'minister ye in your faith, virtue;' Tyndale and Cranmer, 'ir your faith minister virtue;' the Genevan, however, has 'join moreover virtue with your faith.' The verb itself is a compound form of the one rendered 'give' by the A. V. in 1 Pet. iv. 11; which see. The sense is that of *supplying* or *furnishing besides*. It occurs again in ver. 11, and in 2 Cor. ix. 10; Gal. iii. 5; Col. ii. 19. In the New Testament it has lost the technical sense of the simple verb, namely, that of bearing the expense of a chorus for the dramatic exhibitions, and is used in the sense of *furnishing* generally, not in the special sense of discharging office. In harmony with its original idea of performing an act of munificence, it is usually applied to what God furnishes. Here it is applied to what man has himself to furnish in order to make his life correspond, in the free development of the spiritual character, to the liberal endowment of Divine grace. Followed here, too, by the preposition 'in,' it expresses something different from the mere addition of one thing to another. It represents this development of the spiritual character to which the gift of grace pledges the believer as an internal process, an increase by growth, not by external junction or attachment, each new grace springing out of, attempting and perfecting, the other. The life itself is exhibited as a unity; all its elements and possibilities being already contained in faith. It is a unity, however, intended to grow up out of this root of faith, and unfold itself into all the sevenfold breadth of the varied excellencies of the Christian character. The 'faith' itself, therefore, is taken as already existent. They are not charged to *supply* it. But having it, they are charged to furnish along with it, and as its proper issue, seven personal graces. The several elements in the ideal spiritual character are given in pairs, as if each lay already implicit in its immediate predecessor, and belonged to its life and genius. The first thing thus enjoined is 'virtue,'—a word very sparingly used in the New Testament. It is the same term as is applied to God in ver. 3. It occurs also in 1 Pet. ii. 9 (which see), and outside the Epistles of Peter it is found only once, viz. Phil. iv. 18. Here it can scarcely have the sense of our English word 'virtue,' or moral excellence, which would take from the precision of the statement, and reduce it to the vague advice to add to virtue so many other virtues. As in ver. 3 it expressed not mere excellence of character in itself, but the *efficiency* of such excellence, so here it conveys the definite idea of *might, energy*, or *moral courage*—what Bengel aptly terms 'a strenuous tone and vigour of mind.' This is to be furnished *in and with* our faith, or *in the exercise of* our faith; so that our faith shall not be an uncertain, feeble, and timorous thing, but a manly and powerful thing with a touch of heroism in it.—**and in the virtue knowledge.** The simple term for 'knowledge' is used here, not the intense, compound form used in vers. 2, 3, and again at ver. 8. It is the same word as is used in 1 Pet. iii. 7, and means here, as there, not the knowledge of doctrine, but the knowledge which consists in the recognition of what is dutiful and appropriate in conduct. This practical knowledge is to accompany the exercise of the 'virtue,' or moral heroism of faith, lest it run into unregulated zeal, incon-

siderate obstinacy, or presumptuous daring. Peter's recollections of his own bold protestations, and of the hardy venturesomeness which failed him so sadly at the pinch in the 'high priest's palace' (Matt. xxvi. 58, 69–75), would give a special pungency to this article in his counsels. This faculty of 'understanding what the will of the Lord is' (Eph. v. 17), which is necessary to qualify and soften the 'virtue,' has also its own roots in the same. 'An evangelical fortitude is favourable to the enlargement of evangelical knowledge; which, in its turn, is essential to the regulation and safe exercise of fortitude' (Lillie). So it forms an essential step in the progress towards that full 'knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ' which is represented in ver. 8 as the goal of all.

Ver. 6. **And in the knowledge self-control.** This is the grace which appears also as the 'temperance' of which Paul reasoned before Felix (Acts xxiv. 25), and as the last thing noticed in Paul's enumeration of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 23). The noun occurs only in these three cases. It denotes 'temperance' in the largest sense of self-government in all things. This virtue of self-control is so related to 'knowledge,' that the one should not be in exercise apart from the other. Extravagance is the child of ignorance. A right estimate of oneself and mastery over oneself should be fostered by the knowledge which consists in the practical recognition of duty; and this latter should be helped by the former.—**and in the self-control patient endurance.** The grace which is rendered 'patience' both in the A. V. and in the R. V. is of a stronger and more positive character than the familiar English term, and might be more fitly translated *patient* (or, *persevering*) *endurance*. It is a quality never ascribed to God Himself. Where He is spoken of as the 'God of patience,' it is in the sense of the Giver of patience to others (Rom. xv. 5). In the New Testament it seems always to carry with it the idea of manliness, expressing not the mere bearing of trials, but the courageous, persevering endurance of them—'the *brave* patience with which the Christian contends against the various hindrances, persecutions, and temptations that befall him in his conflict with the inward and outward world' (see Ellicott on 1 Thess. i. 3). So, while the A. V. generally renders it 'patience,' it grasps at times the larger sense, translating it, *e.g.*, by 'enduring' in 2 Cor. i. 6, by 'patient waiting' in 2 Thess. iii. 5, and by 'patient continuance' in Rom. ii. 7. It occupies a great place in the New Testament. Christ Himself gives it as the grace in which the soul itself is to be won (Luke xxi. 19). James (chap. i. 3, 4) speaks of it as the grace which, when it is allowed its perfect work, makes believers themselves perfect. It is specially frequent in the Pauline Epistles and the Apocalypse; in which latter it appears and reappears at marked turning-points (Rev. i. 9, ii. 2, 3, iii. 10, xiii. 10, xiv. 12). In coupling it here with self-control, Peter gives the Christian version of the Stoic summary of morality. As the latter amounted to 'bear and forbear,' the former says 'forbear and bear.' Christian self-control is to be practised in and along with the spirit of patient endurance, which saves it from harshness and fitfulness, confirms it into constancy, and mellows it into tenderness and humility. Like the 'meekness' and 'temperance' which stand side by side among the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 23), these two are sister graces, not to be separated, but enriching each other.—**and in the patient endurance godliness.** The same term is used for 'godliness' here as in ver. 3; see note there. It is to be furnished in our practice of endurance, in order to secure the latter from hardening into a stoical, self-centred submission, and to make it the purer constancy which draws its inspiration from reverent regard for God and things Divine.

Ver. 7. **And in the godliness brotherly-love.** See note on 1 Pet. i. 22. In the former Epistle the grace of brotherly-love has a still more prominent place assigned to it (1 Pet. i. 22, 23, ii. 17, iii. 18, iv. 8). Here it is the complement to 'godliness,' keeping it in living connection with what is due to our brethren, and saving our regard for God and His claims from becoming an apology for neglecting His children and their interests. —**and in the brotherly-love love.** This is not a repetition of the exhortation to an intense degree and unfettered exercise of love to the brethren, which is given in 1 Pet. i. 22. Our love, it is meant, strongly as it should beat within the Christian household, ought not to be confined to that, but should enlarge itself into a catholic interest in all men. So Paul charges the Thessalonians to 'abound in love toward the brethren, and toward all men' (1 Thess. iii. 12). —This 'rosary and conjugation of the Christian virtues,' as it is called by Jeremy Taylor, differs both in its constituents and in its arrangement from Paul's delineation of the spiritual character in Gal. v. 22, 23. The one begins where the other ends. With Paul, love stands at the head, and naturally so. For Paul is drawing a picture of what the spiritual character is in contrast with the 'works of the flesh' and in our relations to our fellow-men. Hence he begins with love as the spring of all other graces in our intercourse with our fellows, and introduces faith in the centre of the list, and in the aspect of faithfulness in our dealings with others. Here Peter is engaged with the growth of the spiritual character, and therefore begins with *faith* in Christ as the foundation of all. Elsewhere Paul varies the order, giving love, *e.g.*, the first place in Rom. xii. 9–21, Phil. i. 9; and the last place in 1 Cor. xiii. 13, Col. iii. 12–14. It is hazardous, however, to make more than this of the particular arrangement adopted here. There is no doubt a logical order in the list, and it is possible that it is laid out, as is supposed, *e.g.*, by Canon Cook, so that we get first those graces (virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience) which 'form the Christian character viewed in itself,' and then those which 'mark the follower of Christ (1) as a servant of God, and (2) as a member of the brotherhood of the Church of Christ, and (3) as belonging to the larger brotherhood of all mankind.' But it is enough to notice how these graces are made to blend into each other, each being *in* the other 'like adjoining colours of the rainbow,—mingled with it, and exhibited along with it' (Lillie). It is also worth observing that all the graces which are presented together in living union and interdependence here, are separately expounded with more or less fulness in the First Epistle; cf. i. 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 22, ii. 11, 21, iii. 4, 8, 15, iv. 8.

Ver. 8. **For these things subsisting for you and multiplying.** The A. V. throws this into

the hypothetical form—'if these things,' etc. The writer rather speaks of the graces as already in the readers, and thus gives both greater courtesy and greater force to his recommendation. The suggestive courtesy of the statement appears also in the phrase which the A. V. renders '*be* in you,' and the R. V. 'are yours,' but which means rather 'subsisting for you.' The word selected there is not the simple verb 'to be,' but another which implies not only existence but *continuous* existence, and looks at the possession of graces as a thing characterizing the readers, not merely now, but in their original spiritual condition. It is the phrase which is used, *e.g.*, in Phil. ii. 6 of Christ as '*being* in the form of God;' in Acts vii. 53, of Stephen '*being* full of the Holy Ghost;' in 1 Cor. xiii. 3, of 'all my *goods*;' in Matt. xix. 21, 'sell all that thou *hast*.' In these and similar cases, it implies rightful, settled possession, and looks back from the present moment to the antecedent condition of the subjects. The A. V. also misses the point of the other participle, the idea of which is not that of *abounding*, but rather that of *increasing* or *multiplying* (cf. Rom. v. 20, vi. 1; 2 Thess. i. 3). What is taken for granted, therefore, is not that these graces are in these believers in profusion, or in larger measure than in others, but that, being in them, they are steadily growing and expanding, and exhibiting all the evidence of vitality.—**make you not idle nor yet unfruitful.** The 'make' is here expressed by a term which means to *establish* or *constitute*. The two adjectives are dealt with by the A. V. as if they meant the same thing. There is a clear distinction, however, between them. The latter means 'unfruitful.' The former, however, means not 'barren' but (as Cranmer, Tyndale, and the Genevan render it) 'idle.' It is applied, *e.g.*, to the '*idle* word' (Matt. xii. 36); to the useless *idlers* in the market-place (Matt. xx. 3, 6,—a parable which may have been in Peter's mind when he penned the passage); to the younger widows who are described as '*idle*, wandering about from house to house' (1 Tim. v. 13). The idea, therefore, is that where these graces are one's permanent inward property, at his command, and growing from strength to strength like things that live, they put him in a position, or create in him a constitution, under which it cannot be that he shall prove himself either a useless trifler doing no honest work, or an unprofitable servant effecting what is of no worth even when he gives himself to action. —**unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The A. V. is again astray in rendering '*in* the knowledge,' etc. This 'knowledge' (again with the intense sense of *full, mature knowledge*, as in vers. 2, 3) is represented not as the thing in which they are to be 'not idle nor yet unfruitful,' but as that *with a view to* which all else is enjoined,—the goal toward which all else is meant to carry us. The sevenfold symmetry of the spiritual character, and the furnishing forth of all these varied graces, are recommended not as ends to themselves, but as means toward the higher end of an ever enlarging, and at last perfect, knowledge of Christ Himself. The fact that these graces minister to so blessed a result is one great reason why we should set ourselves to cultivate them with 'all diligence.' They require for their cultivation both the Divine endowment of 'all things serviceable to life and godliness,' and sedulous application on our side. But the object which is set before us is worth all the expenditure, both human and Divine. The dependence of knowledge upon holiness, or of vision upon purity, which is stated in the most absolute form in such passages as Matt. v. 8, Heb. xii. 14, and in relation to practical obedience to God's will in John vii. 17, is presented here in connection specially with the need of completeness in the Christian character and fruitfulness in the Christian life. So, in Col. i. 10, Paul speaks of being '*fruitful* in every good work, and increasing in the *knowledge* of God.'

Ver. 9. **For he who lacketh these things.** This is one of two instances in which the A. V. strangely mistranslates the Greek causal particle 'for' as 'but.' The other is 1 Pet. iv. 15. In Rom. v. 7 it erroneously renders the same causal particle by 'yet.' In the present case it has followed Wycliffe, Tyndale, and Cranmer, who all have 'but,' rather than the Genevan and Rhemish, which give 'for.' It thus entirely misconceives Peter's meaning. He is not simply setting one thing over against another, but is adducing a second reason for the course which he recommends. The reasoning may be understood in more than one way. It may be taken broadly thus—these graces are to be cultivated; *for*, if we have them not, we become *blind*, and 'sink back into a want of power to perceive even the elementary truths of the kingdom of God' (Plumptre). Or it may be put thus, in immediate relation to the nearest idea,—these graces are to be cultivated; *for*, wanting them, we want the capacity for this perfect 'knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' A different expression also is given now to the idea of *possession*. Instead of saying, as before, 'he for whom these things do not *subsist*,' another phrase is used which runs literally, 'he to whom these things are not *present*.' Thus the idea of a possession habitual, and settled enough to warrant its being spoken of as belonging to the person's past as well as his present, gives place to that of a possession which, however it may have been with his past, at least cannot be affirmed of his present. Wherever this is the case with the man as he *now* is, there that state has entered which is next described.—**is blind, being near-sighted.** As the A. V. renders this clause 'is blind, and cannot see afar off,' the latter epithet may seem at first only to repeat, in a weaker and almost contradictory form, what is already expressed by the former. Hence it has been attempted in various ways to make a sharp distinction between the two terms. The latter (which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament) has been rendered, *e.g.*, 'groping' (so substantially the Vulgate, Tyndale, Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, etc.)—a sense, however, which cannot be made good. It has also been rendered 'shutting his eyes' (Stephens, Dietlein, etc.); and the idea has thus been supposed to be this—'he is blind, and that by his own fault, wilfully shutting his eyes.' The word, however, seems to describe not one who voluntarily shuts his eyes (although the R. V. gives 'closing his eyes' in the margin), but one who blinks, or contracts the eyelids in order to see, one who is short-sighted or dim-sighted. Thus the second epithet defines the first. He is 'blind,' not seeing when he thinks he sees, not seeing certain things as he ought to see them. And he is this not in the sense of being 'blind'

to all things, but in the sense of being 'near-sighted,' seeing things in false magnitudes, having an eye for things present and at hand, but none for the distant realities of the eternal world. The rendering of the A. V., therefore (which follows the Genevan), expresses the correct idea; which the R. V. (in its text) gives more clearly as 'seeing only what is near.' With what is said here of *blindness* compare such passages as John ix. 41; Rom. ii. 19; 1 Cor. viii. 2; Rev. iii. 17; and especially 1 John ii. 9–11.—**having forgotten the purification of his sins of old.** The *sins* referred to are the sins of the man's own former heathen life, and the *purification* is that which covered the whole sin of his past once for all when he first received God's grace in Christ. The idea of a *purification* occupies a prominent place in the Epistle to the Hebrews (cf. chap. i. 3, ix. 14, 22, 23, x. 2). There not only *sins* are said to be 'purified,' but also the conscience, the heart, the heavenly things, the copies of the heavenly things, the flesh. The purification is effected by the blood of Christ, and its result is not mere moral purity, but the removal of guilt, or of the sense and conscience of sin. So here the 'sins of old' are said to have been *purified* in the sense of having had the uncleanness belonging to them cleansed away, or their guilt removed. The phrase carries us back to the Old Testament custom of sprinkling blood on objects which had become defiled, and so relieving them of the disadvantages of their ceremonial uncleanness. The 'having forgotten' is expressed in a way of which we have no other instance in the New Testament, but which resembles the phrase rendered 'call to remembrance' in 2 Tim. i. 5. It means literally 'having *taken* (or, *incurred*) *forgetfulness*.' It gives a graver character to the condition, representing it perhaps as one which is voluntarily incurred or willingly suffered, or, it may be, as one which is inevitable where there is neglect to cultivate grace. The sentence is introduced as a further explanation of the blindness. The man is 'blind,' in the sense of having eyes only for what is near and tangible, as the consequence or penalty of his forgetting the great change effected in the past, and living as if he had never been the subject of such grace.

Ver. 10. **Wherefore, brethren, be the more diligent to make your calling and election sure.** The 'wherefore the *rather*' of the A. V. suggests that the course now to be recommended is one to be preferred to some other course dealt with in the context. This is a legitimate interpretation, the Greek word meaning either 'rather' or 'more,' and being used (*e.g.* 1 Cor. v. 2) in order to put a contrast or opposition. It is adopted, too, by not a few interpreters. Some construe the idea thus—instead of trying to reach 'knowledge' apart from the practice of Christian grace, *rather* be diligent, etc. (Dietlein). Others put it so—instead of forgetting the purification of your old sins, *rather* be diligent, etc. (Hofmann). Most, however, take the term in the sense of 'more,' connect the sentence immediately with what has been stated in vers. 8, 9, and regard it as taking up anew the exhortation of ver. 5, and urging it for these additional reasons with greater force. The meaning then is = the case being as it has been explained in vers. 8, 9, let these grave considerations of what is to be gained by the one course and what is to be lost by the other, make you all the more diligent, etc. This is the one instance of the use of the address 'brethren' in the Epistles of Peter. In 1 Pet. ii. 11, iv. 12, and in 2 Pet. iii. 1, 8, 14, 17, we get 'beloved.' But what is meant by making the *calling and election sure?* Many interpreters give the theological sense to both the nouns. So the 'calling' as the act of grace, which takes effect in time, is distinguished from the 'election' as the eternal act or counsel of the Divine Mind. Or the former is defined as that by which we are called in time to the kingdom of grace, and the latter as that by which we are chosen in eternity for the kingdom of glory. Thus the sentence is understood to be an exhortation to make that sure on our side which God has made sure on His (Besser); or, to 'confirm the inference as drawn especially by ourselves from the appearance to the reality . . . from a good life to a gracious condition' (Lillie); or, to make it clear that we 'have not been called in vain, on the contrary that we have been elected' (Calvin). But the fact that the 'election' is named after the 'calling,' and the awkwardness of speaking of the immutable decree of God as capable of being made sure by us, indicate that what is in view here is *not* the eternal election, but the historical,—that is to say, the actual separation of the readers from their old life, and their introduction into the kingdom of Christ. So it is taken by many of the best expositors, including Grotius, Huther, Hofmann, Schott, Mason, Lumby. Those acts of God's grace which called them through the preaching of His Son's Gospel, and took them out of the world of heathenism, were to be made 'sure' (the adjective is the same as in ver. 19; Heb. iii. 6, 14), or *secure*, by following them up by diligent attention to all the virtues into which they had ushered the readers.—**for, doing these things, ye shall never stumble.** The verb which the A. V. renders 'fall' is the same which it renders 'offend' in Jas. ii. 10, iii. 2, and 'stumble' in Rom. xi. 11. It is true, therefore, that it indicates a 'step short of falling' (Plumptre). It is so represented in Paul's question, 'Have they stumbled *that they should fall?*' (Rom. xi. 11); and James (iii. 2) speaks of a *stumbling* or *offending* which is not hopeless. Here, however, it manifestly refers to the final issue of a forfeiture of salvation (Hofmann, Huther, etc.). By the 'these things' we may understand again, as in ver. 8, the graces dealt with in the original exhortation. Not a few, however, take the phrase to refer simply to the duty last mentioned, viz. the making the calling and election sure. The plural form is then explained as due to the fact that the writer regards this 'making sure' as a 'many-sided act' (Dietlein),—as 'not a single act, but multiform' (Mason).

Ver. 11. **For so shall be richly furnished for you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.** Another reason, and one rising far superior to the former, for the careful cultivation of these graces. 'A good life can never be a failure. It may be a life of many storms; but it is not possible that it should end in shipwreck' (Lillie). That was the import of the former statement. 'Nay more,' it is now added, 'such a life shall have a glorious ending.' The future of which the believer is heir is here designated a 'kingdom.' In First Peter it is an 'inheritance.' Nowhere else in the N. T. is

the 'kingdom' described by this adjective, which the A. V. translates 'everlasting.' As the word means much more than simply the *never-ending* (although it includes that), the R. V. more judiciously renders it 'eternal.' The A. V. further gives '*an* entrance,' where Peter speaks of '*the* entrance,'—the well-understood entrance which formed the object of every Christian's hope. Observe also the balance which is maintained (the verb being the same) between what we are to *furnish* in our faith (ver. 5), and what is to be *furnished* to us. It is not the mere fact that the entrance is in reserve for us that is asserted here, but the *kind* of entrance which is secured by a life of growing graciousness. Neither is it exactly the doctrine of degrees of future blessedness that is touched on here. It is supposed by many that the truth struck here is that which appears in such passages as Matt. x. 15, Luke vi. 38, xii. 47, John xiv. 2, 2 Cor. ix. 6, Gal. vi. 8, viz. that 'according to our *different degrees* of improvement of God's *grace* here, will be our *different degrees* of participation in His everlasting *glory* hereafter' (Wordsworth; see also Bishop Bull's Sermon, vii. vol. i. p. 168, as there referred to). But what is immediately dealt with here is not the eternal blessedness itself, but the *entrance* or *admission* into it. Of this it is said that it shall be given 'richly,'—a term which is to be taken in its ordinary sense, and not to be paraphrased into 'certainly' (Schott), or 'in more than one way,' or 'promptly,' etc. The entrance is to be of a kind the reverse of the 'saved, yet so as by fire' (1 Cor. iii. 15). It will be liberally granted, joyously accomplished, richly attended—'so that at any time,' as Bengel well expounds it, 'not as if escaping from shipwreck, or from fire, but in a sort of triumph, you may enter in with an unstumbling step, and take delight in things past, present, and to come.' Milton's 14th Sonnet has been compared with this. See specially the lines in which he speaks thus of the 'works and alms and all thy good endeavour' of the deceased friend:—

'Love led them on; and Faith, who knew them best,
Thy handmaids, clad them o'er with purple beams
And azure wings that up they flew so drest,
And spake the truth of thee on glorious themes
Before the Judge; who thenceforth bid thee rest,
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams.'

CHAPTER I. 12-21.

The Writer's intention to provide for the Remembrance of these things, specially in view of the Certainty of Christ's Coming.

12 WHEREFORE I will not be negligent to put you always[1] in [a]remembrance of these things, though ye know
13 them, and be[2] [b]stablished in the [c]present truth.[3] Yea, I [d]think it meet,[4] as long as I am in this [e]tabernacle, to [f]stir
14 you up, by [g]putting you in remembrance:[5] knowing that [h]shortly I must put off this my tabernacle,[6] even as our Lord
15 Jesus Christ hath[7] [i]showed me. Moreover, I will [k]endeavour,[8] that you may be able after my [l]decease to have these things
16 always in remembrance.[9] For we have[10] not [m]followed [n]cunningly-devised [o]fables,[11] when we [p]made known unto you the power and [q]coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were
17 eye-witnesses of his [r]majesty. For he received[12] from God the Father [s]honour and glory, when there [t]came such a voice

[a] Lu. xxii. 61; Jo. xiv. 26; 2 Tim. ii. 14. Tit. iii. 1; 3 Jo. 10; Jude 5.
[b] 1 Pet. v. 10; Rom. i. 11, xvi. 25; 1 Thes. iii. 2, 13; 2 Thes. ii. 17, iii. 3; Jas. v. 8; Rev. iii. 2.
[c] 1 Cor. v. 3; Heb. xii. 11, xiii. 5; Col. i. 6.
[d] Phil. i. 7.
[e] Acts vii. 46. Cf. also 2 Cor. v. 1, 4.
[f] Mat. i. 24; Mk. iv. 38, 39; Lu. viii. 24; Jo. vi. 18.
[g] Ch. iii. 1; 2 Tim. i. 5.
[h] Ch. ii. 1.
[i] See refs. at 1 Pet. i. 11.
[k] Gal ii. 10; Eph. iv. 3; 1 Thes. ii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 15, iv. 9, 21; Tit. iii. 12; Heb. iv. 11; 2 Pet. i. 10, iii. 14.
[l] Lu. ix. 31; Heb. xi. 22.
[m] Ch. ii. 2, 15.
[n] 2 Tim. iii. 15.
[o] 1 Tim. i. 4, iv. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 4; Tit. i. 14.
[p] Lu. ii. 15; Jo. xv. 15; Acts ii. 28; Rom. ix. 22, 23, xvi. 26; Phil iv. 6, etc.
[q] Mat. xxiv. 3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor. xv. 23, xvi. 17; 2 Cor. vii. 6, 7, x. 10; Phil. i. 26, ii. 12; 1 Thes. ii. 19, iii. 13, iv. 15, v. 23; 2 Thes. ii. 1, 8, 9; Jas. v. 7, 8; 2 Pet. iii. 4, 12; 1 Jo. ii. 28.
[r] Lu. ix. 43; Acts xix. 27.
[s] Rom. ii. 7, 10.
[t] Vers. 18, 20; Acts ii. 2.

[1] *rather*, Wherefore I shall always be ready to put you
[2] are
[3] the truth which is with you
[4] *or*, But I consider it right
[5] in the way of reminder
[6] *literally*, knowing that quick as the putting off of my tabernacle
[7] *omit* hath
[8] *rather*, But I shall also diligently provide
[9] *rather*, that at all times after my decease ye may be able to call up the memory of these things
[10] did
[11] *or*, myths
[12] *literally*, For having received

to him [18] from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son,[14] 18 in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard,[15] when we were with him in the [v] holy mount. 19 We have also a more [w] sure word of prophecy,[16] whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a [x] light [17] that shineth in a dark [18] place, until the day dawn, and the day-star [y] arise in 20 your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the [19] 21 Scripture is of [20] any [z] private [21] interpretation: for the prophecy came not in old time [22] by the [a] will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were [b] moved by the holy Ghost.[23]

[u] Mat. xvii. 5; Mk. ix. 7; Lu. ix. 35. [v] Ex. iii. 5; Josh. v. 15; Mat. xvii. 6; Ps. ii. 6. [w] Rom. iv. 16; 2 Cor. i. 7; Heb. ii. 2, iii. 6, 14, vi. 19, ix. 17; 2 Pet i. 10. [x] Mat. vi. 22; Lu. xi. 34, xii. 35; Jo. v. 35; Rev. xxi. 23, etc. [y] Lu. xii. 54; Jas. i. 11, etc.

[z] Jo. i. 11, 41, iv. 44; Rom. viii. 32, x. 3; Acts iv. 23, etc. [a] Jer. xxiii. 26; Tit. i. 13. [b] Ver. 17.

[18] *rather*, when such a voice was borne to him by the sublime Glory
[14] *or*, my Son, my beloved [15] *or*, And this voice we heard borne out of heaven
[16] *or*, And we have the word of prophecy more sure [17] lamp
[18] *or, as in margin of R. V.*, squalid [19] *omit* the
[20] cometh of; *also omit* any [21] *or, as in the margin of the R. V.*, special
[22] *literally*, for not by the will of man was prophecy ever borne
[23] *or*, but being borne by the Holy Spirit men spake from God.

The writer next expresses his resolution to use the brief portion of life now remaining to him in recalling the attention of his readers to the great truths to which he has been referring, and in making provision for the recollection of them after his own decease. He avows the deep solicitude which he feels in regard to this, and his anxiety that the gift of Divine grace, and the obligations connected with it, may not be forgotten or thought little of, when the living voice of apostolic teaching ceases to admonish and remind. He is at pains to explain why he has made such a resolution and entertains such anxiety. It is because of the certainty and gravity of that 'power and coming' of the Lord, which had been proclaimed by his brother Apostles and himself. He is desirous to have the minds of his readers filled with this above all things, and their lives coloured and directed by it, because every other Christian interest and all Christian duty are bound up with it. In words touched with the light which is shed by the solemn recollection of the past, the aged writer speaks of the witnesses to which he can appeal in behalf of the certainty of these things which had been preached with respect to the Lord's Coming, and the manner of life which befitted its anticipation. These witnesses are found in the transfiguration scene and the voice of prophecy. The verses form a paragraph complete within itself, with a character and with contents entirely its own. It comes in, however, quite appropriately as an intermediate section. It makes a natural appendix to the first division of the Epistle, which is itself a kind of summary of subjects handled at greater length, but with much the same phraseology, and in much the same spirit, in the First Epistle. It also prepares the way, particularly by the prominence given to the 'power and coming' of the Lord, for the very different paragraph which follows in the next chapter.

Ver. 12. **Wherefore I shall always be ready to put you in remembrance regarding these things.** The 'wherefore' represents the resolution now expressed as having its reason in what has been already said. That may be either the immediately preceding thought or the tenor of the previous section as a whole. The motive lies in the responsibilities connected with the endowment of grace received from Christ, or, more particularly, in the consideration that the entrance into the eternal kingdom of Him who bestows that endowment can be 'richly furnished' only to those who do the things which have been recommended. The phrase 'these things' is taken by some to refer to what follows, namely, the statement in ver. 16 about the Lord's Advent; by others its reference is limited to one particular subject, such as the *graces* enumerated in vers. 5–7 (Hofmann), or the *kingdom* and its future (de Wette). It is best taken, however, as pointing back to the whole burden of the opening statement—the duty of Christian progress, the necessity of Christian diligence, the blessings secured by the right course, the loss entailed by the opposite. The writer professes his *constant* readiness (the 'always' qualifies the 'ready' rather than the 'put in remembrance') to preserve in them a loving recollection of these facts and responsibilities. Greater point, too, is given to the resolution by adopting, instead of the negative reading of the A. V. and the Received Text, 'I will not be negligent,' the positive, and far better supported, reading of the R. V. and most critical editors, 'I shall be ready,' or, as it also may be rendered, 'I shall be sure,' 'I shall proceed.' The formula occurs only once again in the N. T., viz. in Matt. xxiv. 6, where the A. V. translates it simply 'ye *shall* hear.'—**though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you.** Again, as in ver. 8, with something like the courteous tact of Paul (comp. *e.g.* Rom. xv. 14, etc.) and John (1 John ii. 21), the writer speaks as if his anxiety after all were superfluous. The term rendered 'established' is the one which we have already had in 1 Pet. v. 10. It is the word which Christ used in forewarning Peter (Luke xxii. 32, although the A. V. varies the translation there—'when thou art converted, *strengthen* thy brethren'). The cognate noun appears in the

word rendered 'stedfastness' in 2 Pet. iii. 17. The A. V., by adopting the literal translation of the last words, 'the present truth,' is apt to suggest an erroneous idea. What is meant is neither the truth which *specially suits the present time*, nor the truth which is *at present under consideration*, nor even (as Bengel puts it) the fulfilled truth of O. T. promise and prophecy, but the truth which is *present with you*, which has come into their possession through the preaching of the Gospel. The idea is much the same as that expressed by Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 1. The phrase occurs again in Col. i. 6, where 'the word of the truth of the Gospel' is spoken of as that 'which is come unto you.'

Ver. 13. **But I consider it right, so long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up in the way of reminder.** 'But' represents the sense better than the 'And' of the R. V. Although he gives them credit for knowing these truths already, and being firmly grounded in them, he deems it, *nevertheless*, a duty not to be silent or regard them as beyond danger. Their danger, on the contrary, is so grave that he must speak to them as long as life lasts (comp. Phil. i. 7); and this with the special object of *stirring* them up, or *rousing* them (the verb occurs again in chap. iii. 1, and elsewhere in the N. T. only in the Gospels, and there always with the literal sense, Mark iv. 38, 39; Luke viii. 24; John vi. 18), and keeping them, by continuous reminders, awake to all that spiritually concerns them. The body is here figuratively described as a tent or 'tabernacle' by a word which occurs again in the figurative sense in the next verse, and once in the literal sense, viz. in Acts vii. 46. It is a longer form of the term used by Paul in 2 Cor. v. 1, 4, and of another which occurs repeatedly elsewhere, *e.g.* in the record of Peter's own words at the Transfiguration (Matt. xviii. 4; Mark ix. 5, etc.). The figure was a somewhat common one in later Classical Greek, particularly in medical writers. It conveyed the idea that *the body* is the mere *tenement* of the man, and a fragile one, erected for a night's sojourn and quickly taken down. In the Book of Wisdom (ix. 15) we have the same figure, with a somewhat different application—'a corruptible body weighs down the soul; and the *earthen tent* burdens the much-thinking mind.' The Christian Father Lactantius uses it thus: 'This, which is presented to the eyes, is not man, but is the tabernacle of man; whose quality and figure is seen thoroughly, not from the form of the small vessel in which he is contained, but from his deeds and habits' (iii. 3, Ramage's rendering). Here, according to Bengel, 'the immortality of the soul, the briefness of its abode in a mortal body, and the ease of departure in the faith, are implied.'

Ver. 14. **Knowing that quick is the putting off of my tabernacle.** There is a mixture of metaphor here. The idea of a 'putting off' (the word occurs only here and in 1 Pet. iii. 21), or *denuding*, which is applicable to a *garment*, takes the place of the *striking* or *taking down* which holds good of the 'tent' or 'tabernacle.' We have a similar mixture of metaphors in Ps. civ. 2, 'who coverest thyself with light as with a *garment*: who stretchest out the heavens as a *curtain*' (*i.e.* the curtain of a tent). The same occurs also in 2 Cor. iv. 1–3, and it is suggested that it may have come naturally to Paul at least, through his familiarity with the tent of Cilician haircloth, 'which might almost equally suggest the idea of a habitation and a vesture.' (See Dean Stanley's *Comm. on the Epistles to the Corinthians*, p. 413.) There is some doubt as to the precise point intended by the 'quick.' The epithet is a rare form (in Classical Greek purely poetical, and in the N. T. found only here and in chap. ii. 1) of the ordinary adjective which means either *swift* or *sudden*. It may indicate either the speediness of the *approach* of death, or the speediness of the *work* of death. In the one case Peter's motive for stirring them up is his knowledge of the brief interval that had separated him from death. In the other it is his knowledge of the fact that he is to have a swift and sudden death, a mode of death which admonishes him to leave nothing to be done then which can be done now. The latter idea is favoured by the reference which immediately follows to what had been made known to Peter by Christ Himself. It would be superfluous for one who was already far advanced in life to adduce a declaration of Christ's as the ground of his knowledge of the nearness of his own end. It is quite in point for him, however, to cite such a declaration as the ground of his knowledge of the *kind* of death he was to die. And we see plainly from the narrative of the incident which in all probability was in Peter's mind,—an incident which it was left to his brother in the apostleship and companion in the scene itself to record at length and to interpret (John xxi. 18, 19), that what was communicated was his destiny to die a sharp, sudden, violent death. The latter view, therefore, is adopted by Wycliffe (alone among the old English Versions), the Vulgate, and many of the foremost interpreters (Bengel, Huther, Schott, Hofmann, Plumptre, Alford, Mason, etc.). The former, however, is preferred by Dr. Lumby and others, as well as by the A. V., Tyndale (who gives 'the time is at hand that I must put off,' etc.), Cranmer, the Genevan, and the Rhemish.—**even as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.** Not '*hath* showed me,' as the A. V. puts it, but '*showed* me' (comp also 1 Pet. i. 11, where the word is rendered 'signify'), the reference being to the one memorable intimation made by the Sea of Galilee. It is entirely unnecessary to suppose, as is done by some, that Peter had received another special revelation, bearing on the *time* of his death.

Ver. 15. **But I shall also give diligence** (or, *diligently provide*) **that at all times ye may be able after my decease to call up the memory of these things.** The A. V. is slightly at fault here both as to terms and as to arrangement. 'Moreover' less correctly conveys the idea than 'but' or (as in the R. V.) 'yea.' For the writer is rather resuming and amplifying the statement made in ver. 12, than explaining some additional provision which he meant to make. The 'always,' which the A. V. connects with the 'have in remembrance,' rather defines the 'may be able after my decease.' The word, too, properly speaking, means 'on each occasion,' or 'at all times as they rise.' The phrase rendered 'have in remembrance' is one found nowhere else in the N. T. In Classical Greek it means to 'make mention of.' It is possible that it has that meaning here, and that the writer expresses his desire to make it possible for his readers to report these things to

others. It is generally taken, however, in the modified sense of *recalling to memory;* which has the analogy of similar modes of expression (*e.g.* in Rom. i. 9; Eph. ii. 16), and is in harmony with the thought of the previous verses. Various views are entertained of what is exactly referred to in this promise or resolution. It is supposed, *e.g.*, that Peter alludes to the two Epistles as a written provision he was to leave behind him. But the form of the resolution, 'I *shall* give diligence,' does not easily fit in with that. It is supposed, too, that he may have in view the training and appointment of teachers to succeed him, or the transcription of copies of his Epistles for wide distribution, or the preparation of a Gospel (namely, that of Mark) under his direction. Most probably, however, he is simply expressing his intention to continue to communicate with them, as he had already been doing, on the great truths of the Gospel as long as opportunity presented itself, and thus to arm them to the utmost against the peril of forgetfulness. Not a few Roman Catholic interpreters, including some of the very best, have construed this into a statement of Peter's permanent supervision of the Church, and even his heavenly intercession in behalf of it. Notice that the word rendered 'decease' here means literally 'exodus,' and is the very term used in Luke's account of the Transfiguration (ix. 31). Elsewhere it occurs only once, and that in the literal sense, viz. in Heb. xi. 22, where it is translated 'departing.'

Ver. 16. **For we did not follow cunningly devised myths, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The change from the 'I' which the writer has used through vers. 12, 13, 14, 15, to 'we' here is to be noticed. He is to speak now not of his own personal resolutions and expectations, but of what he had preached in conjunction with other apostles, and specially of one significant scene which he had witnessed in company with John and James. The 'follow' is expressed by a strong compound verb which occurs in no other book of the New Testament, and indeed only twice again (chap. ii. 2, 15). It is supposed by some to convey the idea of following a *false* lead. But it expresses rather the *closeness* of the following. The phrase rendered 'fables' by the A. V. and R. V. is the term 'myths' which is so familiar in the Classics. In the New Testament it occurs only here and in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. i. 4, iv. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 4; Tit. i. 14). The 'myths' are defined (by the participle of a verb which is used here in the bad sense, but which has the good sense of *making wise*, in the only other New Testament passage where it occurs, viz. 2 Tim. iii. 15) as 'cunningly devised,' or *cleverly elaborated.* Wycliffe and the Rhemish give 'unwise,' 'unlearned,' which is an inadequate rendering. Cranmer gives 'deceitful;' Tyndale and the Genevan 'deceivable.' There has been much dispute as to the particular myths which are in view. Some have advocated the extraordinary opinion that they were Christian myths,—legends like those which the apocryphal Gospels, and other curious products of early Christian literature, show to have become connected, within a comparatively brief period, with the history of Christ's birth and opening life. Others take them to have been fancies of the kind which afterwards took shape in the Gnostic speculations about wisdom and the æons and emanations from Deity. Others identify them with the ordinary heathen myths, specially those about the descent of the gods to earth. Many regard them to be Jewish myths,—such monstrous rabbinical embellishments of Old Testament history as appear in the apocryphal books. Probability lies, on the whole, on the side of this last view, particularly if the parallel statements in the Pastoral Epistles are found to suit best as warnings against the 'common Judaizing tendency, and an unspiritual, Pharisaic study of the Old Testament, disputatious, cleaving to the letter, and losing itself in useless hair-splittings and rabbinical fables' (Neander, *Planting of Christianity*, i. p. 342, Bohn). In this case we may the better understand, perhaps, why so much of the teaching of this Epistle and that of Jude turns upon the oldest portions of the Old Testament history. It may be that these, along with others outside the Old Testament itself, but dealing with Old Testament personages and events, were the subjects of the rabbinical, legendary embellishments; that they were made use of by the false teachers to whom Peter refers; and that, as Canon Mason suggests, Jude and he, therefore, were 'fighting these seducers with their own weapons.' Another question to which different answers are given is this—What communication is alluded to in the statement, 'we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'? The term 'coming,' which means literally 'presence,' does not denote, as is supposed by some good interpreters, either Christ's *earthly life* or His *Nativity.* Here, as in chap. iii. 4, Matt. xxiv. 3, 27, 1 Cor. xv. 23, 1 Thess. iii. 19, etc., it expresses His *Second Advent*, His return in judgment. This teaching, therefore, on the 'power' (or 'fulness of the might of the glorified Lord') (Huther) and 'advent' of Christ, is identified by some with that which is given by Peter himself in his former Epistle; and it is suggested then that the novel and mysterious declaration about 'the spirits in prison' may have exposed Peter to misunderstandings which he wished to remove (so Plumptre). But as the writer uses the plural 'we,' and obviously associates himself with others in what he proceeds here to say, it seems best to understand him to refer generally to what he and his comrades in the apostleship had proclaimed on the subject, whether by oral communication or by written. This teaching, however it may have reached the parties immediately addressed here, would be known to them to carry the weight of apostolic authority with it.—**but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.** This term for 'eye-witness' is peculiar to the present passage. The cognate verb, too, is used in the New Testament only by Peter (1 Pet. ii. 12, iii. 2; which see). They are the technical words in Classical Greek for the final stage of initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries. The noun may carry with it here the idea of *privileged* spectators, or eye-witnesses of something which was hidden from others. The other term, 'majesty,' applied here to the glorious appearance of Christ in the Transfiguration, is found only twice again in the New Testament, viz. in Luke's account (ix. 43) of the amazement felt by the people at 'the mighty power' (as it is there rendered) of God seen in the miracle which followed the Transfiguration; and in the same

writer's description of the 'magnificence' (as the same term is here translated) of Diana (Acts xix. 27). In the original the whole sentence has a turn which may be represented thus—'For it was not as having followed cleverly-contrived myths that we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but as having become eye-witnesses of His majesty.'

Ver. 17. **For he received from God the Father honour and glory.** In the original it is 'For having received,' etc., the sentence being broken by what is said about the voice, and the writer hurrying on to the conclusion unmindful of the fact. The title 'Father' is appropriately introduced here, as the testimony which Christ received from God was one to His own Sonship. The same conjunction of 'honour' and 'glory,' or 'praise,' occurs in Rom. ii. 7, 10. In 1 Pet. i. 7 we have the richer conjunction of 'praise and honour and glory,' or, as the better reading gives it, 'praise and glory and honour.' Certain distinctions are attempted between the two terms here, the 'honour' being supposed to refer, *e.g.*, specially to the honourable witness borne by the voice, and the 'glory' to the *light* that shone about Christ, or broke forth from Him. Such distinctions, however, are precarious. The thing dwelt on is not the splendour of Christ's own appearance on the occasion, but the tribute which came by the voice. The two terms, therefore, are generally descriptive either of the magnificence of the scene, or of the majesty of that particular tribute. Compare with this the words of another eye-witness of the same event; John i. 14.— **when such a voice was borne to him by the sublime glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.** The voice is called '*such a* voice,' that is to say, 'such as I am now to record,' or perhaps 'a voice so wonderful in kind.' It is also described, both here and in the next verse, not as 'coming,' but as being 'borne' or 'brought' to him, the verb employed being that which is applied again to the prophets as 'moved' or '*borne*' by the Holy Spirit (in ver. 21), and also to the '*rushing*' (as it is there rendered) mighty wind, noticed by Luke in his narrative of the Pentecostal descent (Acts ii. 2). The next words are rendered 'from the excellent glory' by the A. V.; in which it follows Cranmer and the Genevan. Tyndale gives 'from excellent glory;' Wycliffe, 'from the great glory;' the Rhemish, 'from the magnificent glory.' 'Excellent' is a somewhat weak representation of the adjective, which means rather 'magnificent' or 'sublime.' This is its only New Testament occurrence. The 'from' also is in reality 'by,' the preposition being the one regularly used with that sense after passive verbs. Hence many of the best recent interpreters regard the words as a designation of God, and translate them 'by the sublime majesty.' In support of this, Matt. xxvi. 64 is referred to, where the term 'power' is taken to be a title of God. It is possible that the peculiar phrase is due to Peter mentally likening the cloud out of which the voice broke to the glory-cloud of the *Shechinah*, which was to Israel the visible sign of the Divine presence. The testimony uttered by the voice differs very slightly from the form in which it is reported in Matthew's Gospel. A shorter form is given in Mark (ix. 7) and Luke (ix. 35). Here the reading which is preferred by the most recent editors gives it still greater intensity. It may be represented thus—'My Son, My beloved One, *this is*,—in whom I am well pleased.' The 'well pleased' is given in the past tense (='on whom I set My good pleasure'), as expressive of the changelessness of the satisfaction once for all placed in Him.

Ver. 18. **And this voice we heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount.** The character of the Divine testimony to Christ is thus yet more carefully described, in respect both of its own directness and of the credibility of the report which was given of it. It came immediately from heaven. It was reported, too, by those who were present with Christ Himself on the occasion, and were both eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of what took place, not only seeing with their own eyes the scene, but hearing with their own ears the voice. By the 'holy mount' is to be understood not the temple-mount (as if the voice referred to were, as Grotius imagined, that recorded in John xii. 28), but the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter does not identify it with either Hermon or Tabor. He gives it, however, the same honourable title that Zion enjoyed in the Old Testament. The sacred associations now connected with it, and the fact that it had been the scene of a manifestation of Divinity, had made it 'holy' ground. So, as Calvin notices, the spot where Jehovah appeared to Moses became 'holy' ground. - It is interesting to observe how in his old age Peter's mind is filled with the wonders of the Transfiguration, and how he finds in the glory which he witnessed there a presage of the glory in which Christ was to return. It may be asked why he singles out this particular event, and only this one, when he feels called to assert the historical basis of his teaching, and to repudiate all suspicion of legendary mixture. The answer is obvious. The truths which at present he is pressing on the attention of his readers, are those relating to the Second Coming of Christ, that Coming in power and judgment which was doubted, denied, and scoffed at. It was natural, therefore, that he should instance the sudden glory which he had witnessed breaking forth from and encircling Christ's person on the Mount. In that he recognised an earnest of the power in which Christ was to return. It is rightly observed, too, that this entire statement, given as it is independently, with variations of its own, and not professing to be quoted from any written narrative, is an important confirmation of the truth of the Gospel narrative of the Transfiguration (so Plumptre, etc.).

Ver. 19. **And we have more sure the prophetic word.** Such is the literal rendering of a clause the exact point of which is not a little uncertain. The context, specially what is said in vers. 20, 21, chap. ii. 1, shows that we are to understand by 'the prophetic word' here (cf. the phrase 'the Scriptures of the prophets' in Rom. xvi. 26), neither the Gospel (Luther), nor the written or spoken prophecies of the New Testament, nor these along with the Old Testament prophecies (Plumptre), but Old Testament Scripture itself as a whole, or the sum of Old Testament prophecy regarding Christ. It is clear, too, that a comparison is instituted. For the adjective, which is elsewhere used to describe the 'promise' as *sure* (Rom. iv. 16), the 'word spoken by angels' as *stedfast* (Heb. ii. 2), the anchor of the soul as 'sure and *stedfast*' (Heb. vi. 19), etc., is

not to be rendered 'very sure,' as some have imagined, but means 'more sure,' or 'more stedfast.' The question, therefore, is whether the prophetic word is compared with itself or with something else. There is much to be said on both sides. Some, indeed, who favour the latter view, take the comparison to lie between the prophetic word and the 'cunningly devised myths,' which have been already repudiated. This, however, is unlikely. With much better reason others conceive the prophetic word as it once was to be compared with the same word as it now is, the point being that its entire testimony on the subject of Christ's 'power and Coming' has been made surer than before by the historical accomplishment of so much of its witness to the Messiah, or (as others prefer to put it) by the confirmation lent it through the record borne to Christ in the voice and the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration. The clause might then be rendered, 'and we have the prophetic word *made* more sure.' So it is paraphrased by Mr. Humphry—'having been witnesses of His majesty and hearers of His voice from heaven, we have the word of prophecy made more firm (as a foundation of our faith) by the fulfilment which it has received' (*Comm. on the Revised Version*, p. 450). Among the English Versions, the Rhemish and the Revised adopt this view. The A. V. itself is wrong. The clause, however, admits another meaning, which may be freely given thus: 'and we have a more sure *word*, namely the prophetic word;' or, 'we have something surer still, namely the prophetic word.' In this case the testimony of the Old Testament is referred to as of greater certainty, or as carrying in it greater power of conviction, than even the voice heard at the Transfiguration. The comparison thus becomes one between the exceptional testimony of the heavenly voice and the familiar testimony of Israel's ancient Scriptures. The advantage is given to the latter as a ground for confidently expecting the Lord's Coming. Why this is the case the writer himself does not say. Various reasons have been suggested. Peter has been supposed to assert this greater sureness for O. T. prophecy, *e.g.*, because it was more venerated on account of its age (Calvin, Whitby, etc.); or because it was a permanent witness and one open to all, while the witness borne through the Transfiguration was transient and seen only by a select three (Scott, etc.); or because it was a direct witness to Christ's Coming, while the Transfiguration was merely a historical scene, amounting at the best to a type or presumption of that event (Sherlock, etc.); or because it was not a single testimony and one dealing with only a part of the truth, as was the case with the voice, but a cumulative and continuous testimony, and one covering all that bore upon Messiah's sufferings and glory (Alford). Be the reasons what they may, it would be natural enough for a Jew like Peter to claim for the Jewish Scriptures a superiority over all other forms of testimony. And on this view, which is now followed by many excellent interpreters, we get a sense entirely germane to the context. The writer has expressed his wish to do all in his power to secure their perpetual regard for the truths in which his readers had been instructed. His own belief in the certainty of his Lord's Coming is at the foundation of this anxiety. He desires to see his readers equally assured in the same expectation, and with that view particularizes two reasons for the belief. The one is what he himself saw on the Mount; the other is what others have as well as he, namely the prophette testimony of the Old Testament. Each of them he puts forward as a valid witness. But he gives the preference to the one which could not be regarded as limited or exceptional.—**whereunto ye do well giving heed.** With the formula compare the similar usages in Acts x. 33; Phil. iii. 14; Heb. ii. 1; 3 John 6. It implies careful, earnest, believing attention.—**as unto a lamp shining in a dark place.** The term rendered 'light' by the A. V. means 'lamp' or 'torch.' It is the one used in Matt. v. 15; Mark iv. 21; Luke viii. 16, xi. 33, 36, xv. 8; Rev. xviii. 23, xxii. 5 (in all which it is rendered 'candle' in the A. V.); and also in Matt. vi. 22; Luke xi. 34, xii. 35; Rev. xxi. 23; John v. 35 (in which last it describes the Baptist). With its application to the prophetic word compare Ps. cxix. 105. The epithet 'dark' (of which this is the only N. T. example) means literally *dry*, *arid*, and then *dingy*. It perhaps combines here the two ideas of *squalid* (as the R. V. gives it in the margin) and *gloomy*. This 'dark place,' the squalid gloom of which is being pierced by the prophetic word, is understood by some to refer to a low state of spiritual knowledge and experience, which is to yield to a higher state of illumination and assurance in the case of Christians. It is best taken, however, as a figure of the world itself. Compare the prophetic description of *darkness* covering the earth (Isa. lx. 2, etc.).—**until (the) day shall dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts.** Two of these words are peculiar to the present passage, namely *dawn* and *day-star*. The former (which is different from the term in Matt. xxviii. 1; Luke xxiii. 54) means to *shine through*, and is therefore peculiarly in point where the idea to be expressed is, as here, that of the morning-light as it first breaks through the darkness. The latter is to be taken in the strict sense,—not as equivalent to the *sun*, or generally to the *light*, but as referring to the day-star, the 'light-bringer' (as the term literally means) which appears with the dawn. How are these figures, therefore, to be interpreted here? Many of the best commentators are of opinion that, on account of the definition 'in your hearts,' and for other reasons, a subjective application must be given to the whole sentence, and that it is to be connected immediately with the previous 'giving heed.' In this way the idea is taken by some to be, that the prophetic word must be attended to until the present imperfect measure of grace and knowledge in the believer gives place to an immediate perception and clear assurance, which will supersede the necessity for such prophetic light. The analogy of similar figures elsewhere, however (see specially Rom. xiii. 11, etc.), is in favour of the objective sense. The reference, therefore, seems to be to the day of Christ's Second Coming, in comparison with which the present state of the world is the time of night and darkness. The prophetic word to which believers are to give earnest heed is a lamp which is to go on shining until the Christ of whom it testifies appears. The fact that this is the ministry it is meant to serve is the reason why they ought to give such heed to it. And when the day of the Lord's Advent, which shall be like the rising of dawn upon the world, is about to

enter, as enter it certainly shall, its signs shall make themselves known to Christ's own flock—in their hearts shall rise a light and assurance like the day-star, which comes with the day and attests its full entrance. Those, therefore, are right who think that the particular point of time in view is that immediately heralding the Second Advent itself, 'the time when the sign of the Son of man appears (Matt. xxiv. 30), when believers are to lift up their heads because their redemption draweth nigh (Luke xxi. 28), when accordingly the morning-star which ushers in the day shall arise in their hearts' (Huther).

Ver. 20. **Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture comes of private interpretation.** This sentence states a fact which is to be recognised in the heed which should be given to the prophetic word, or a reason why such heed should be given earnestly. It is by no means easy, however, to determine what that fact or reason is. The verse has been largely taken advantage of by Roman Catholic divines in the interest of their theory of the relation in which Scripture stands to the Church. It has been regarded as a protest against the right of private judgment. Some Protestant commentators read it as a caution against interpreting particular prophecies separately by themselves, instead of interpreting them in the full light of prophecy as a whole. Others discover in it a re-statement of what Peter has already said in the former Epistle (chap. i. 11, 12) about the inability of the prophets to understand all that was in the prophecies which they uttered. Others suppose it to mean that prophecy is not its own interpreter, but can be fully understood only in the light of the event. Not a few (including Luther, Erasmus, Besser, Schott, Hofmann, etc.) take it, in one way or other, to be an assertion of the fact that the readers of prophecy are not able of their own understanding to interpret it, but are dependent for its interpretation upon the Holy Spirit. It cannot be said, however, that any one of these views falls in naturally with the context. Another must be sought more in harmony with the train of thought. The terms themselves, at the same time, are for the most part sufficiently plain, and the following verse makes the ruling idea in the writer's mind equally clear. The phrase 'prophecy of Scripture' means a prophecy *belonging* to Scripture, or as Dean Plumptre puts it, a prophecy 'authenticated as such by being recognised as part of Scripture.' The 'is' of the A. V. and the R. V. does not quite fairly represent the original, which means rather *arises, comes into existence*, or *originates*. The interpretation turns upon the sense of the adjective 'private,' which may mean either 'special' (as in the margin of the R. V.), or 'one's own;' and still more upon the sense of the noun rendered 'interpretation.' This noun is found only this once in the N. T. It is used, however, by one of the ancient Greek Versions of the O. T. in the sense of the 'interpretation' or *reading* of a dream (Gen. xl. 8). The cognate verb, too, occurs in Mark iv. 34 (where the A. V. renders it 'expounded'), and in Acts xix. 39 (where it is translated 'determined'). The verse, therefore, seems to mean that prophecy does not *originate in the prophet's own private interpretation of things*—that it is not the mere expression of his own reading of the future. This explanation (which Bengel suggested, and Huther, Alford, etc., have followed) connects the verse easily and clearly both with what precedes and with what follows. The fact that prophecy is something so different from man's own view of events or forecastings of the future is to be known 'first,' that is, it is to be recognised as a fact of primary importance. It is a reason why we should give that earnest heed to it which was enjoined in the previous verse. And in what sense prophecy is something more than the expression of the prophet's own ideas or prognostications, is stated in the next verse.

Ver. 21. **For not by man's will was prophecy borne at any time.** The statement is more absolute than it is made to appear in the A. V. The phrase 'not of old time' means 'never,' or 'not at any time.' The verb rendered 'came' is the one which was used already in vers. 17, 18, and means *sent* or *communicated* in the sense of being *borne on*. It points here, therefore, not to the utterance of prophecy, but to the prophetic *afflatus*, or to the prophecy as a gift imparted by God, and in relation to which man himself was simply a recipient.—**but, being borne on by the Holy Ghost, men spake from God.** Documentary evidence is in favour of this reading, which is both shorter and more expressive than that of the A. V. It drops the official title of the prophets as 'holy men of God,' and, in harmony with the emphatic denial of the agency of 'man's will' in the prophetic message, speaks of the bearers of prophecy simply as 'men.' It describes them further as men who became prophets only by receiving an impulse from the Holy Spirit which bore them on, and as speaking, therefore, 'from God,' that is to say, as commissioners from Him, having the point of issue for their message not in their own will but in God's will. On the term 'borne on' compare Acts xvii. 15, 17, where it is used of the ship *driving* before the wind. The A. V. misses the point when it renders '*as* they were moved.' The statement is, that they spake *because* they were so moved.

CHAPTER II. 1–16.

Warnings against False Teachers.

1 BUT there were[1] [a]false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you,[2] who[3] privily shall bring in [b]damnable [c]heresies,[4] even [d]denying the Lord that [e]bought them, and [f]bring upon themselves[5] [g]swift
2 destruction. And many shall [h]follow their [i]pernicious ways;[6] by reason of whom the [k]way of truth[7] shall be [l]evil spoken
3 of. And through[8] [m]covetousness shall they with feigned words [n]make merchandise of you:[9] whose [o]judgment now of a [p]long time [q]lingereth not,[10] and their damnation[11] slumbereth not.
4 For if God [r]spared not the[12] angels that[13] sinned, but cast them down to hell, *and* [s]delivered them[14] into chains[15] of
5 [t]darkness, to be[16] [u]reserved unto [v]judgment; and spared not the [w]old world, but [x]saved Noah, the eighth *person*,[17] a [y]preacher of righteousness, [z]bringing in the [a]flood upon the
6 world of the [b]ungodly;[18] and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes, [c]condemned them with an [d]overthrow, [e]making them an [f]ensample unto those that after should live
7 [g]ungodly;[19] and [h]delivered just[20] Lot, [i]vexed with the
8 [k]filthy conversation of the [l]wicked:[21] (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and [mm]hearing, [n]vexed his righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds:[22])
9 the Lord [o]knoweth how to [p]deliver the [q]godly out of [r]temptations,[23] and to [s]reserve the unjust unto [t]the day of
10 judgment to be [u]punished:[24] but chiefly them that [v]walk

[a] Mat. vii. 15, xxiv. 11, 24; Mk. xiii. 22; Lu. vi. 26; Acts xiii. 6; 1 Jo. iv. 1; Rev. xvi. 13, etc.; Jer. vi. 13; Zech. xiii. 2.
[b] Mat. vii. 23; 2 Thes. ii. 3, etc.
[c] Acts v. 17, xv. 5, xxiv. 5, 14, xxvi. 5, xxviii. 22; 1 Cor. xi. 19; Gal. v. 20.
[d] Mat. x. 33; Acts iii. 13; 1 Tim. v. 8; 1 Jo. ii. 22, 23; Jude 4.
[e] 1 Cor. vi. 20, vii. 23; Rev. v. 9, xv. 3, 4.
[f] Ver. 5; Acts v. 28; Gen. vi. 17.
[g] See refs. at ch. i. 14.
[h] See refs. at ch. i. 16.
[i] See refs. at 1 Pet iv. 13.
[k] Acts ix. 2, xix. 9, 23.
[l] See refs. at 1 Pet. iv. 4.
[m] Mk. vii. 22; 2 Cor. ix. 5; Eph. iv. 19, etc.
[n] Cf. Jas. iv. 13.
[o] 1 Cor. xi. 29; 1 Tim. v. 12; Jas. iii. 1.
[p] Ch. iii. 5.

[q] Mat. xxv. 5; Ps. cxxi. 3, 4. [r] Acts xx. 29; Rom. viii. 32, xi. 21; 1 Cor. vii. 28; Jer. xiii. 14. [s] Lu. xxiii. 25, etc.
[t] Ver. 17; Heb. xiii. 18; Jude 6, 13. [u] Jo. xii. 17; Acts xxv. 21; 1 Pet. i. 4. [v] Mat. x. 15; 2 Thes. i. 5, etc.
[w] Mat. v. 21; Acts xv. 21. [x] Jo. xvii. 12; Jude 24. [y] 1 Tim. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11. [z] See refs. at ver. 1.
[a] Mat. xxiv. 38, 39; Lu. xvii. 27; Gen. vi. 17, etc. [b] Rom. iv. 5, v. 6; 1 Tim. i. 9; 1 Pet. iv. 18; Jude 4, 15.
[c] Mat. xx. 18, etc. [d] 2 Tim. ii. 14; Gen. xx. 29. [e] Rom. iv. 17; 1 Tim. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11; Heb. i. 2.
[f] Jo. xiii. 5; Jas. v. 10; Heb. iv. 11. [g] Jude 15. [h] Lu. i. 74; Rom. vii. 24; 2 Cor. i. 10, etc. [i] Acts vii. 24.
[k] See refs. at 1 Pet. iv. 3. [l] Ch. iii. 17. [m] 1 Cor. xii. 17. [n] Cf. Mat. xiv. 24. [o] Mat. vii. 11; Lu. xii. 56; Phil. iv. 12; 2 Tim. i. 5; Jas. iv. 17. [p] See at ver. 7. [q] Acts x. 2, 7; Isa. xxiv. 16. [r] See refs. at 1 Pet. i. 6.
[s] See at ver. 4. [t] Ch. iii. 7; Mat. x. 15; 1 Jo. iv. 17; Rev. xiv. 7; Jude 6. [u] Acts iv. 21. [v] Ch. iii. 3; Jude 16, 18; Jer. vii. 9, 24.

[1] *rather, as in the R. V.*, arose
[2] *better, with R. V.*, as among you also there shall be
[3] *or*, the which [4] *literally*, heresies of destruction
[5] *literally*, having brought upon themselves, *omitting* and
[6] *literally*, wantonnesses [7] *or*, of the truth [8] in [9] *or*, make gain of you
[10] *literally*, for whom the sentence from of old is not idle
[11] destruction [12] *omit* the [13] *or*, when they
[14] *or*, but casting them into Tartarus, committed them [15] *or*, pits
[16] *omit* to be [17] *or, as in the R. V.*, with seven others [18] of ungodly men
[19] *literally*, having laid down an example of those who should live ungodly
[20] *or*, righteous
[21] *better*, sore distressed by the walk of the lawless in wantonness
[22] *or literally*, for by sight and hearing the righteous man dwelling among them day by day tormented his righteous soul with their lawless deeds
[23] temptation
[24] *rather, as the R. V. puts it*, to keep the unrighteous under punishment unte the day of judgment

after the [w] flesh in the [x] lust of uncleanness,[25] and [y] despise [z] government: [a] presumptuous *are they*, self-willed,[26] they are
11 not [b] afraid to speak evil[27] of [c] dignities: whereas[28] angels,
which are greater in power and might, [d] bring not [e] railing
12 [f] accusation[29] against them before the Lord. But these, as
[g] natural [h] brute [i] beasts,[30] made to be taken and destroyed,[31]
speak evil of[32] the things that they [k] understand not, *and*[33] shall
13 utterly[34] [l] perish in their own corruption; *and*[33] shall [m] receive[35]
the [n] reward of unrighteousness, *as* they that [o] count it [p] plea-
sure to [q] riot in the daytime:[36] [r] spots *they are*[37] and
[s] blemishes, [t] sporting themselves[38] with their own [u] deceiv-
14 ings[39] while they [v] feast with you: having eyes [w] full of
[x] adultery,[40] and that cannot cease[41] from sin; [y] beguiling [z] un-
stable souls: an heart they have [a] exercised with [b] covetous
15 practices;[42] [c] cursed [d] children:[43] which have [e] forsaken the
[f] right way, and are gone [g] astray,[44] following the [h] way of
Balaam *the son* of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteous-
16 ness; but was [i] rebuked for his [k] iniquity:[45] the dumb [l] ass,[46]
[m] speaking with man's voice, [n] forbade[47] the madness of the
prophet.

[w] Jude 7. [x] See refs. at ch. i. 4. [y] Mat. vi. 34; Rom. ii. 4; 1 Tim. iv 10; Heb. xii. 2. [z] Eph. i. 21; Col. i. 16; Jude 8. [a] Tit. i. 7; Gen. xlix. 3; Isa. lxvi. 2; Prov. xxi. 24. [b] Mk. v. 33; Isa. lxvi. 2. [c] Jude 8. [d] Jo. xviii. 29; Acts xxv. 18. [e] Acts vi. 13; 1 Tim i. 13; 2 Tim. iii. 2; Rev. xiii. 5. [f] Jo. vii. 24, viii. 16; Jude 9; Deut. xix. 6. [g] Rom. i. 26, 27. [h] Jude 10 [i] Heb. xiii. 11; Jude 10; Rev. iv. 6, etc. [k] 1 Cor. xiv. 38. [l] Jude 10. [m] See refs. at 1 Pet. i. 8. [n] Jude 11. [o] Acts xxvi. 2; Phil. ii. 25; Heb. x. 29, xi. 11, 26.

[p] Jas. iv. 1, 3, etc. [q] Lu. vii. 25. [r] Eph. v. 27. [s] Lev. xxi. 16–23, etc. [t] Isa. lv. 2, lvii. 4.
[u] Heb iii. 13, etc. [v] Jude 12. [w] Jas. ii. 18, etc. [x] Jas. iv. 4, etc. [y] Ver. 18; Jas. i. 14.
[z] Ch. iii. 16. [a] Heb. v. 14, etc. [b] Ver. 3. [c] Heb. vi. 8, etc. [d] See refs. at 1 Pet. i. 14.
[e] Acts vi. 2. [f] Lu. iii. 3, 4; Acts viii. 21, ix. 11, xiii. 10. [g] See refs. at ch. i. 16. [h] Jude 11.
[i] Job xxi. 4, xxiii. 2. [k] Prov. v. 22. [l] Mat. xxi. 5. [m] Ver. 18; Acts iv. 18. [n] Lu. xxiii. 2; Ps. xxxix. 9.

[25] *or*, pollution [26] *rather*, self-willed darers, *or*, darers, self-willed
[27] *or*, they tremble not when speaking evil of [28] *literally*, where
[29] *literally*, an evil-speaking judgment [30] as irrational animals
[31] *or*, born naturally with a view to capture and destruction
[32] speaking evil in matters [33] omit *and* [34] even
[35] receiving as they shall, *or perhaps*, *as in the R. V.*, suffering wrong
[36] *or*, reckoning revelling in the daytime pleasure
[37] omit *they are* [38] revelling
[39] in their deceits, *or perhaps*, *as in the R. V.*, in their love-feasts
[40] *literally*, of an adulteress [41] *or*, that cannot be made to cease
[42] having a heart practised in covetousness [43] children of a curse
[44] having forsaken the right way they went astray [45] transgression
[46] *literally*, a dumb beast of burden [47] *better*, *with R. V.*, stayed

The second chapter of the Epistle stands entirely by itself. It is of so peculiar a character, that some have doubted whether it belonged originally to this Epistle, or could have been written by the same hand. It abounds in uncommon or entirely exceptional phrases, and is marked by a singularly broken style. It introduces a subject, and is pervaded by a tone, which are very different from what the previous chapter presents. The subject, however, is not absolutely unconnected with what precedes. The writer's anxiety that his readers should remain established in the truth, after his own decease, prepares the way for what he has to say about the dangers of the future. And the change in the tone is not inconsistent with the change in the theme. The colours, however, in which he gives the outline of the future are of the darkest, and the terms which he uses are of the strongest. He speaks of the rise of false teachers in the Church as a certain thing, if not indeed a thing already realized. He describes their efforts, their pretensions, their successes, their lives, their fates, in a long train of passionate utterances, which have been compared to 'blasting volleyed thunder.' The terrible picture of the working of this 'mystery of iniquity' within the Church is unrelieved, too, by any reference to the ultimate victory of the kingdom of Christ, or to the larger issues of the conflict between good and evil. The gloom of the description is mitigated only by the assurance that the Lord knows as well how to deliver the godly themselves as to bring swift and awful destruction upon their enemies and seducers. The relation in which this chapter stands to the Epistle of Jude is also a matter of some interest. The points at which the two writings meet are too numerous and too marked not to demand explanation. Some argue, accordingly, in favour of the

priority of Peter; others with equal decision assert the priority of Jude. The question whether the peculiarities of the case are to be explained on the theory of Peter's dependence on Jude, on that of Jude's dependence on Peter, or on that of the dependence of both upon a common source, is far from being settled, if indeed it admits at all of anything like conclusive settlement. We shall find, too, that along with very striking and continuous resemblances to Jude, this chapter exhibits some remarkable variations.

Ver. 1. **But there arose also false prophets among the people.** Israel is obviously meant by 'the people' here (comp. Rom. xv. 11; Jude 5, etc.). As in the former Epistle, therefore, so here Peter regards the N. T. Church as the Israel of God, and finds in what took place within the O. T. Israel an image of what is to take place in the N. T. Church. The 'but' introduces a contrast with what was stated at the close of the previous chapter. There were prophets in Israel who 'spake from God,' *but* there arose in the same Israel false prophets, and so it shall be in the N. T. Israel. The term 'false prophet' occurs in the O. T. (*e.g.* Jer. vi. 13), but is of much commoner occurrence in the N. T. The form of the word leaves it somewhat uncertain whether it means precisely one who *prophesies false things*, or one who *falsely pretends to be a prophet*. The latter sense is preferred by some of the best interpreters. The class of false prophets is dealt with in Deut. xiii. 1-5.—**as also among you there shall be false teachers.** The term 'false teachers' occurs nowhere else in the N. T. As in the case of the 'false prophet,' it is uncertain whether it has the sense of *pretended* teachers, or that of teachers *of falsehood*. Both amount, however, to much the same. Christ Himself foretells the rise of 'false prophets' (Matt. xxiv. 24), and Paul warned the elders of Ephesus of men who should arise within the Church 'speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them' (Acts xx. 30).—**who shall privily bring in destructive heresies.** The 'who' means here rather 'such as,' pointing not merely to the *fact* that they shall so act, but to their *character* as such. The verb (which occurs only here) means literally *to bring in by the side*. It may convey the idea of *secrecy* or *insidiousness*, which both the A. V. and the R. V. represent by '*privily* bring in.' Compare Paul's use of the corresponding adjective, 'false brethren *unawares brought in*' (Gal. ii. 4). Jude (ver. 4) uses a different term to express the same idea, and speaks of the event as already accomplished ('crept in unawares'), while Peter speaks of it as still future. The 'damnable heresies' of the A. V. is an unhappy rendering of the original, which means 'heresies of destruction,' that is, heresies which lead to destruction, or, as the R. V. gives it, 'destructive heresies.' It is doubtful whether the word 'heresies' is to be understood here in the sense now attached to it, namely, that of *heterodox, self-chosen doctrines*, or in the sense of *party divisions*. The latter is undoubtedly the regular sense of the term in the N. T.; comp. Acts v. 17, xv. 5, xxiv. 5, xxvi. 5, xxviii. 22 (in all which it is rendered 'sect' in the A. V.), and also Acts xxiv. 14; 1 Cor. xi. 19 (where it goes with *schisms*), and Gal. v. 20 (where it ranks with *divisions*). There is nothing to necessitate a departure here from the stated use. For the idea of *party divisions created by false teaching* suits the context well enough. Some good interpreters (Huther, etc.), however, are of opinion that the matter in view is the *opinions* themselves, that this is more in keeping with the phrase 'privily bring in,' and that the word, therefore, in this one instance at least, approaches the modern sense.—**even denying the Lord that bought them, having brought upon themselves swift destruction.** The construction of these clauses is uncertain. It is possible that one or other of the participles stands instead of the finite verb, and that the whole, therefore, takes the form, 'and shall deny the Lord that bought them, bringing on themselves,' etc., or better, 'and denying the Lord . . . shall bring upon themselves,' etc. It is best, however, to retain all the participles as such, and we have then an *intensification* of the previous statement. In bringing in these heresies of destruction the false teachers will be *even* denying the Lord, and their doing so will mean that they have brought doom upon themselves. If Peter writes this Epistle, this reference to the *denial* of Christ as the climax of all possible evil in faith, becomes doubly significant. The name given to Christ here is the term *Master*, which is repeatedly used to designate the head of a house in his relation of authority over, or in his rights of possession in, the members of his house (comp. 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2; 2 Tim. ii. 21; Tit. ii. 9; 1 Pet. ii. 18). Christ's claims upon them are further described as the claims of One who had made them His own by purchase. Jude (ver. 4) omits this notice of the purchase. The purchase price, which is elsewhere stated to be His blood (1 Cor. vi. 20, vii. 23; Rev. v. 9), is left unexplained. The passage is one of several, in which Christ's death is presented in its world-wide attitude, as the means of instituting new relations between God and all mankind. These are balanced by others which ascribe a special effect and a particular design to His death in relation to His own, who have been given Him of His Father. Both must find a place in our doctrine of His reconciling work. As to the 'swift,' see on chap. i. 14. As there, so here it means *sudden*—a destruction speedy, inevitable, 'like the lightning's stroke' (Lillie).

Ver. 2. **And many shall follow their wantonnesses.** The A. V. gives 'pernicious ways,' following a reading which is now given up. On the noun see on 1 Pet. iv. 3. The same strong term is used for *following*, as in chap. i. 16. It denotes completeness or closeness of pursuit. Here again the immoral life is represented as the natural result of the false belief. So too, and still more positively, in Jude 4.—**by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of.** As to the verb see on 1 Pet. iv. 4. Christianity is designated 'the way of the truth' as being a mode of life which results from, or bears the qualities of, the truth. The term 'way' in this particular application occurs with marked frequency in the Book of Acts (comp. ix. 2, xvi. 17, xviii. 25, 26, xix. 9, 23, xxii. 4, xxiv. 14). The connection leaves it ambiguous whether the persons referred to here are the false teachers themselves, or their followers, or both together. The most natural reference on the whole would be to those who have been immediately spoken of as certain to follow these teachers. In this case the point may be, as it is understood, *e.g.*, by

Alford, that greatest injury is done to the cause of Christ among those outside by men who, while 'seeming to be in the way of truth, yet favour and follow false teachers.'

Ver. 3. **and in covetousness by feigned speeches they will make merchandise of you.** The verb rendered 'make merchandise of' occurs but once again in the N. T., viz. in Jas. iv. 13, where it is translated 'buy and sell.' In later Classical Greek, and also in the Septuagint (comp. Prov. iii. 14), it occurs with the sense of *gaining over*. Hence some interpreters think that here it expresses the desire of the false teachers to win adherents. The more usual sense of the verb, however, is to *make gain* of an object. The idea, therefore, is rather that the false teachers, known for their life of sheer covetousness, and having greed for their great motive, will use their deluded followers for purposes of gain, employing artful speeches (perhaps on the subject of Christian liberty, as some suggest) as their weapons in the base traffic with souls. The sentence thus uncovers darker deeps in the corruptness of their character and the baseness of their aims. This evil distinction appears again in vers. 14, 15. It is given in terms not less strong by Jude (vers. 11, 16). Compare also the indignant declarations on a like sordid state of matters, which are made by Paul (1 Tim. vi. 5; Tit. i. 11). The epithet 'feigned' is peculiar to this passage. With these 'made up,' or 'craftily constructed' speeches, compare also the 'good words and fair speeches' with which Paul tells us some who caused divisions and offences deceived the hearts of the simple (Rom. xvi. 18).—**whose judgment now from of old lingereth not.** Literally it runs thus: 'for whom the sentence now from of old lingereth not.' The sentence of a righteous Judge is represented as having been pronounced against them from of old, as on the wing now, and as certain to descend. The phrase here translated 'from of old' occurs only here and in chap. iii. 5. The verb rendered 'lingereth' is peculiar to this passage. Its cognate adjective, however, occurs in chap. i. 8; where see Note.—**and their destruction slumbereth not.** The verb 'slumber' occurs only once again, viz. in the parable of the Virgins (Matt. xxv. 5). Literally it means *to nod*. The 'destruction' (the 'damnation' of the A. V. is inexact) is represented as a living thing awake and expectant. 'Long ago that judgment started on its destroying path, and the fate of sinning angels, and the deluge, and the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, were but incidental illustrations of its power, nor has it ever since "*lingered*" as if now it had no work on hand, or for a moment slumbered on the way. It advances still, strong and vigilant as when first it sprang from the bosom of God, and will not fail to reach the mark to which it was pointed "*from of old*"' (Lillie).

Ver. 4. **For if God spared not angels when they sinned.** This rendering (which is adopted by the R. V.) comes nearer the original than that of the A. V. It is not merely that *those* of the angels who did sin were not spared, but that even the class of angels as such were not spared *when* sin entered among them.—**but casting them into Tartarus committed them to pits of darkness in reserve unto judgment.** There is a little uncertainty here both as to the connection and as to the reading. Some good interpreters arrange the clauses thus: 'having cast them down into hell (bound) with chains of darkness, committed them as in reserve unto judgment.' The preferable construction, however, is the other. Ancient authorities, again, vary between two slightly different forms of the word which the A. V. renders 'chains.' One of these means what the A. V. makes it—'chains,' *ropes*, or *cords* (comp. Prov. v. 22). This reading gives a sense in harmony with the companion statement in Jude (ver. 6), as also with another in the Book of Wisdom, 'they were bound with a chain of darkness' (xvii. 27). The best manuscripts, however, support the other form, which means *caves*, *dungeons*, or, as the R. V. puts it, 'pits.' The term itself, in either form, occurs only this once in the N. T. The word here used for 'darkness' is found again only in ver. 17 and in Jude 6, 13. The verb rendered 'cast them down to hell' by the A. V. is also peculiar to the present passage. It is the heathen term for consigning to *Tartarus*; that is, the dark abyss, as deep beneath Hades as heaven is high above earth, into which Homer tells us (*Iliad*, viii. 13, etc.) Zeus cast Kronos and the Titans. In later mythology it denoted either the nether world generally, or that region of it to which gross offenders were condemned. Here, as the immediately following words indicate, Peter has in view neither *Hades*, the world of the departed generally, nor *Gehenna*, *hell* in the sense of the place of final judgment, but the intermediate scene or state of penalty. As the participle is in the present tense, the appended clause should be translated not '*to be* reserved,' but '*being* reserved' or 'in reserve unto judgment.' The Vulgate and all the old English Versions go astray here.—The case of the angels is introduced as the first of three historical events to which Peter appeals in proof of the certain judgment of the false teachers. It has been supposed by many that Peter is pointing here to the sin dimly indicated in Gen. vi. 1-7, the 'sons of God' being taken there to be a synonym for angels. Others regard him as referring to ideas on the subject of the sins and penalties of angels, which were traditional among the Jews and became embodied in such books as that of Enoch (vii. 1, 2). The passage itself, however, deals chiefly with the punishment of the angels, and simply mentions the fact of their sin, without explaining its nature. Jude gives no more definite account of it than that they 'kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation' (ver. 6). And over the whole question of angelic sin Scripture offers little or nothing to satisfy curiosity. With Peter's description here compare Milton's:

> 'Here their prison ordained
> In utter darkness, and their portion set
> As far removed from God and light of heaven,
> As from the centre thrice to the utmost pole.'
> —*Paradise Lost*, i. 71-74.

Ver. 5. **and spared not the old world, but preserved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.** The second historical instance of the penal justice of God does not appear in the companion statement of Jude. On the other hand, Jude introduces as his first case another historical event to which Peter makes no reference here, namely the Divine punishment of the unbelieving Israelites who had been delivered

out of Egypt. The 'flood' is described here by the term (= cataclysm) which is used in Matt. xxiv. 38, 39, and by the Greek Version of the O. T. (Gen. v. 17). The region of the flood is termed not only 'the old (or, 'ancient') world,' but also 'the world of the ungodly,' the fact that it had practically become the absolute possession of the ungodly being the reason for God's act of judgment. Noah is designated 'a preacher (or, 'herald') of righteousness,' in explanation of his exemption. He is styled 'the eighth person,' or as it may be rendered (with the R. V.), 'with seven others,' simply in reference to the historical fact. There is nothing to suggest that Peter intended the phrase to convey any mystical meaning, as if, *e.g.*, it served as a symbol of the completeness of the saved Church. It expresses, however, the fewness of the righteous in comparison with the world-wide multitude of the ungodly. The number of those saved from the Deluge is specified also in 1 Pet. iii. 20. Perhaps in mentioning this case, and the following, Peter had in mind his Lord's own words (Luke xvii. 26, 29). The verb rendered 'saved' by the A. V. means simply to *keep*, or *guard*, and is supposed by some to refer particularly here to the words 'shut him in' in the narrative of Genesis (vii. 16).

Ver. 6. **and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, having made them a type of those that should live ungodly.** The term used for the 'overthrow' (=catastrophe) which constituted the punishment in this third historical instance is the one which is employed in the narrative of the event itself in Gen. xix. 29. In the N. T. it occurs only once again, and there in a figurative sense, viz. in 2 Tim. ii. 14. The brief description here is remarkable for its force and vividness. The word 'turning into ashes,' or, 'burning to ashes' (which occurs only here), is itself a strong and graphic expression. The retribution, too, is exhibited in all its righteous severity as a condemnation to an absolute overthrow. The destruction of the cities of the plain is regarded by the prophets (cf. Isa. i. 9, 10; Ezek. xvi. 48-56), as well as by Peter, as an illustration or typical instance of the judicial principles on which God acts. The scriptural references to these cities and their fate are uncommonly numerous.

Ver. 7. **and delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the behaviour of the lawless in wantonness.** Here again we have some unusual words. The verb which is rendered 'vexed' by the A. V., but which has the stronger sense of 'sore distressed' (as the R. V. puts it), or 'worn down,' occurs only once again, viz. in Acts vii. 24, where it is translated 'oppressed.' The adjective which the A. V. translates 'wicked,' but which has the more definite sense of 'lawless,' occurs only once again, namely in chap. iii. 17. As to the word 'conversation' or 'behaviour,' see on 1 Pet. i. 15; and as to the term 'wantonness,' see above on ver. 2. Jude omits this notice of the deliverance of Lot, which in Peter serves to throw into still stronger relief the unerring penal judgment of God, but also to prepare the way for the assertion of God's knowledge of how to 'deliver the godly out of temptation.'

Ver. 8. **for by sight and hearing that righteous man, dwelling among them from day to day, tortured his righteous soul with their unlawful deeds.** A parenthetical explanation of how it was that Lot was 'sore distressed.' The Vulgate, Erasmus, etc., strangely take the 'sight and hearing' as definitions of the directions in which Lot was *righteous*. The point, however, manifestly is, that the soreness of his distress was due to the fact that, living among these wicked men, he had the protracted pain of seeing with his own eyes and hearing with his own ears day after day things against which his soul revolted. The strong term 'tortured' or 'tormented' (cf. such occurrences of the same term as Matt. viii. 6, 29; Mark v. 7; Luke viii. 28; Rev. ix. 5, xi. 10, xiv. 10, xx. 20, etc.), and the repetition of the moral epithet in 'that *righteous* man' and 'his *righteous* soul,' exhibit the pain as the acute pain due to natural repulsion. Nothing is said here of the faultiness ascribed to Lot's action by the narrative of Genesis, or of the way in which he came to live among these men. Everything is done to present a telling picture of a righteous man thrown into godless society, and not suffering the edge of his righteous feeling to become blunted by lengthened familiarity with the coarse licentiousness of neighbours who mocked at the restraints of all law, human and Divine, but undergoing daily torment from sights and sounds which he was helpless to arrest.

Ver. 9. **The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment.** The *knowledge* which is here in view is the Divine type of knowledge, which means both the perception of the way and the possession of the ability. 'Temptation' is used here in the sense which it has in 1 Pet. i. 6 (on which see Note), as including not only temptation in the limited sense, but all species of trial. The '*to be* punished' which the A. V. gives (in this following the Vulgate) is an incorrect reading. The participle is present, and the idea is that the unrighteous are sustaining now a certain measure of punishment, in the state in which they are held in reserve for the final judgment of the great day. This sentence gives, in a somewhat free form, the conclusion which is expected for the series of conditional statements which began with ver. 4. It is as if the writer had said, 'If it has always happened, as I have stated it to have happened in these several historical instances with which all are familiar, is it not plain that the Lord will act on the same principle with these false teachers?' But while the previous context would lead us to look simply for a statement of the penal side of God's righteousness, Peter introduces here the other side as well. His notice of God's righteous care for the godly, however, is only for the moment. In the next verse he takes up only the punitive principle, and proceeds to make a pointed application of that to a particular class.

Ver. 10. **but chiefly those who go after the flesh in the lust of pollution, and despise lordship. Darers, self-willed, they tremble not in speaking evil of dignities.** The parties aimed at appear to be the false teachers. Formerly they were described as only about to arise. They are spoken of now as already existing. The change from the future to the present may be due simply to the definite realization of the future in the writer's prophetic vision. But it is to be accounted for rather by the fact that the first movements of the evil, which was afterwards to prove so great, were already discerned within the Church. Peter,

therefore, brings the general principle which he has illustrated to bear above all upon a class now under his own eye. These were the men, he means, for whom there could least be exemption from the sweep of God's punitive judgments. He proceeds to complete his account of what these men are, adding stronger colours to the picture of their scorn of law, their hostility to Christ, their covetousness, their sensuality. The description of their immorality is made more general than in Jude (ver. 7) by the omission of the epithet 'strange' which qualifies the 'flesh' in the latter. The phrase 'go after' occurs in the literal sense in Mark i. 20, and in the metaphorical in Jude 7; Jer. ii. 5. The lust of pollution (the latter word occurs only here) means the lust which pollutes. The term which the A. V. renders 'presumptuous,' and which occurs again only in Tit. i. 7, means rather 'daring,' or 'darers.' Instead of 'presumptuous *are they*, self-willed' (which latter adjective occurs only here), therefore, we should translate either 'self-willed darers,' or (with R. V.) 'daring, self-willed.' The difficulty is in determining the sin alluded to in the two phrases 'despise lordship' and 'speaking evil of dignities,' which reappear in almost the same terms in Jude 8. Many interpreters, specially those of older date, have understood the offence to be that of contemptuous disregard of *human* authority, whether of that generally in all its forms, or of ecclesiastical rule, or of civil and political rule (Calvin, Erasmus, etc.), in particular. Recent commentators, again, have for the most part taken other than human authorities to be intended. Some, *e.g.*, think that *good angels* are referred to in both the 'lordship' and the 'dignities;' others, that *evil angels* are denoted by both; others, that *God* or *Christ* is meant by the former, and either good angels (Ritschl) or evil angels (Wiesinger) by the latter. In the only other N. T. occurrence of this term 'lordship' or 'dominion' (Eph. i. 21; Col. i. 16), it is used of angels. In Jude 8 (the only other instance of the word in such an application) the term 'dignities' is put, along with the whole statement, in immediate connection with what is said of Michael. The present passage, too, leads at once to direct mention of angels. These facts give probability to the view that by both terms angelic powers, in the character of God's agents in the authoritative administration of earthly things, are intended. All that is meant, however, may be a general mention of authority as such, and of the contempt of that, in all its forms, human, angelic, and Divine, as a characteristic mark of the class dealt with. In Rom. xiii. 1, 2, we find the word 'power' in an equally indefinite, though perhaps less extensive, sense.

Ver. 11. **Where angels, greater as they are in strength and power, bring not against them before the Lord a railing judgment.** The phrase 'before the Lord' is omitted by some good authorities, and is bracketed by the most recent editors of the text. The 'railing' is expressed by an adjective connected with the verb, which is translated 'speak evil of' in ver. 2. In Acts vi. 11, 1 Tim. i. 13, 2 Tim. iii. 2, it is given as 'blasphemous' or 'blasphemer.' The word rendered 'accusation' by the A. V. means 'judgment,' and is so given in all the earlier English Versions. The opening relative, which the A. V. translates 'whereas,' means simply 'where,' and may be rendered 'in cases where,' or 'in matters in which.' The verse has received very different interpretations. The good angels, *e.g.*, are supposed to be contrasted as a class with the evil angels in point of strength, and with the false teachers in respect of reverence. Or those angels who, like Michael, are supreme among all angels are understood to be referred to, and to be contrasted either with the 'darers' or with the 'dignities.' The most reasonable explanation, however, seems to be that even angels, who so far excel men, do not presume themselves to speak in terms of railing judgment against even offenders like these 'darers.' The reckless, impious audacity of the latter is thus presented in the darkest possible colours by being set over against the reverent regard for authority which in all circumstances characterizes the former. The statement which is given here broadly and generally, is connected with the eminent instance of Michael in Jude. Peter's words here may take their form from the description of the scene between Joshua, Satan, and the angel of Jehovah in Zech. iii. 2. It is not improbable, however, that for their present purpose both Peter and Jude make use of some tradition or current belief on the subject of the angels, which was familiar enough to his readers to need no explanation at the time. From the Rabbinical writings and the Apocryphal books we can gather how large a mass of popular and traditional lore grew up from an early period around many points of Old Testament doctrine.

Ver. 12. **But these, as irrational animals, by nature born for capture and destruction.** The string of epithets here is somewhat difficult to represent adequately. The latter phrase runs literally 'born natural,' etc., and may convey the idea either that they are not born *spiritual* creatures, or that in point of *natural constitution* they are intended only 'for capture and destruction.' The rendering of the A. V., 'but these as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed,' expresses the sense sufficiently well, only that it connects the 'natural' with the 'beasts,' instead of with the 'born.' The order given by the best authorities is followed by the R. V., 'but these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed.' These last words represent substantives in the original. Hence some take the sense to be 'to take and destroy,' the idea then being that the irrational creatures are made to get their own maintenance by capturing and killing other creatures. The passive sense, however, 'to be taken and destroyed,' is more in harmony with the context.—**speaking evil in things of which they are ignorant.** The 'speaking evil,' or 'railing,' refers back to the '*railing* judgment' of the previous verse. The senseless and malignant reviling indulged in by these men in matters which they are incapable of understanding, and in which ignorance should command silence, shows how like they are to the irrational beasts. And as they resemble these in their mode of life, Peter goes on to say, they shall resemble them in their destiny.—**shall in their destruction also be destroyed.** Many good interpreters give the ethical meaning to the word 'destruction' here. In this case the sense will be, as the A. V. gives it, 'shall utterly perish in their own corruption,' or (as it is more fully put, *e.g.*, by Alford), shall go on practising the corrupt life to which they

have sold themselves with increasing appetite until they are themselves destroyed by it. The idea, however, is rather this: in the destruction which they bring upon others, they shall yet bring destruction upon themselves. So Humphry (*Comm. on Revised Version*, p. 451) makes it= while causing destruction to others, shall accomplish their own destruction; with which non-ethical sense of the verb and noun he compares (with Wordsworth) 1 Cor. iii. 17, 'If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy.'

Ver. 13. **suffering wrong as the wages of wrong-doing.** The reading represented by the 'shall *receive*' of the A. V., is displaced by another, meaning 'suffering wrong,' which has the support of the oldest documents, is accepted by the R. V. and the most recent critical editors, and gives us one of those 'emphatic and vehement repetitions of words' which are recognised as distinctive of this Epistle (see Humphry, *ut sup.*). It is observed that the phrase 'wages of unrighteousness' is peculiar to Peter (here, in ver. 15, and in his speech in Acts i. 18).—**reckoning luxurious living in the day a pleasure.** It is doubtful whether the first noun here can mean altogether so much as either the 'riot' of the A. V. or the 'revel' of the R. V. It occurs once again in the N. T., viz. in Luke vii. 25, where it is translated 'live *delicately*.' The cognate verb, too, is translated 'live in *pleasure*' in Jas. v. 5. The term denotes *luxurious* or *delicate living*. The phrase 'in the day' is understood by some (Beza, the Dutch and Italian Versions, etc.) to mean *daily*. But that is erroneous. Others (the Vulgate, Schott, Huther, Calvin, Alford, etc.) take it to mean *for a day*, or the *temporal, transient*, so that the idea would be 'reckoning the luxurious living which lasts but the little day of man's life a pleasure.' The best interpretation, however, makes the phrase equivalent to *in the daytime* (Hofmann, etc.). The sentence then exhibits these men as pressing day and night alike into the service of luxurious delights. It is also in harmony with Peter's own statement in Acts ii. 15 on the scandalous profligacy which would be implied in men becoming drunken by 'the third hour of the day.' Compare also Paul's words in 1 Thess. v. 7.—The train of participles, nouns, and adjectives which begins here and goes on through the next verse may be connected either with what precedes (so Huther and the majority) or with what follows (so Hofmann, etc.). In the former case they bring out the shamelessness of the 'unrighteousness' or 'wrong-doing' for which they are to receive their wages. In the latter case they begin a new sentence which finds its verb in the 'have forsaken' of ver. 15, and runs on to the end of ver. 16. They form a 'series, or rather torrent, of short exclamatory clauses' (Lillie), disclosing the dark elements of the reprobate character which makes such a judgment as has been asserted inevitable.—**spots and blemishes.** The former term occurs again only in Eph. v. 27, although another form of the same is found in Jude 12. The verb, too, occurs in the 'spotted' of Jude 23 and the 'defile' of Jas. iii. 6. The latter term, which means properly *blame*, and then *blemish*, occurs only here. Its verb is found in 2 Cor. vi. 3, viii. 20. We have the negatives of these two terms in the description of the lamb 'without blemish and without spot' in 1 Pet. i. 19.—**sporting in their own deceits,** while **they feast with you.** The 'sporting,' as the A. V. gives it, is expressed by a compound verb connected with the noun rendered 'luxurious living' above. It may be translated, therefore, *luxuriating*. There is a remarkable variation among ancient documents between two readings, differing from each other only by a single letter. One of these means 'deceits,' as the A. V. gives it, or 'deceivings' as it is put in the margin of the R. V.; the other means 'love-feasts,' as it is given in the text of the R. V. In the latter case it is meant that these men pervert to their own advantage and enjoyment even the social meals, the *agapæ* or 'loves,' as they came to be called, which were the expression of Christian brotherhood. That abuses crept into this institution at a very early period, simple as in all probability it was, appears from 1 Cor. xi. 2. In the former case (and the balance on the whole is on that side) the idea is that they luxuriate in deceits by which they seek their base ends, for this purpose taking advantage even of opportunities unsuspectingly offered them of social intercourse and entertainment with the Christian brotherhood.

Ver. 14. **having eyes full of an adulteress.** The noun rendered 'adultery' both by the A. V. and by the R. V. means really an *adulteress*. The phrase 'full of' also means, at least occasionally in the Classics, 'engrossed by.' Thus the sense may be either *having eyes for nothing else but an adulteress*, or *revealing in their very eyes the adulterous object of their desire*. It is possible, as has been suggested, that Peter is recalling here his Lord's words recorded in Matt. v. 28. There is no reason to suppose, however, that any particular temptress occupying a prominent position is in view. The phrase is simply a bold method of expressing the sensual passion of the men,—men whose eyes burned with impure fires, whose adulterous lust gleamed in their eyes.—**and that cannot be made to cease from sin.** So it may be rendered rather than simply 'unsatisfied with sin,' or 'that cannot cease from sin.' The clause adds the strokes of restlessness and persistence to the picture of their sensual profligacy.—**enticing unstable souls.** The verb occurs again in ver. 18 and in Jas. i. 14, and is a more picturesque term than the 'beguiling' of the A. V. It means to allure by holding out a bait to one.—**having a heart exercised in covetousness.** The N. T. more than once brings *greed* and *sensuality* into very intimate connection (1 Thess. iv. 6; 1 Cor. v. 11; Eph. v. 3, 5), and hence some eminent interpreters (Calvin, Plumptre, etc.) suppose that the sin of impurity is meant here. But as covetousness has already been introduced in ver. 3 as a prominent characteristic of these men, there is no reason for departing from the ordinary sense of the word here. Three great vices, therefore, which go naturally together, being only so many types of the same selfishness, viz. luxuriousness, sensuality, avarice, are ascribed to them here.—**children of a curse;** that is to say, men who are devoted to the curse, who are of the quality or character so described. On this formula see note on 1 Pet. i. 14; comp. also John xvii. 12; Eph. ii. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 3. The description given in this verse as a whole does not meet us again in Jude.

Ver. 15. **forsaking the straight way they**

went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (or, *wrong-doing*). The strong verb for a *following* which amounts to close pursuit or imitation is used here again, as in chap. i. 16, ii. 2. The form Bosor, for the Beor of the Old Testament, is explained as due to the peculiarity of the Galilean pronunciation. Peter's own Galilean speech 'bewrayed' him (Matt. xxvi. 73). On the phrase 'loved the wages of unrighteousness' see on ver. 13. Some good documents exhibit a different reading here, which connects this clause not with Balaam, but with these men, viz., 'following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, *they* loved the wages of unrighteousness.' It is to be observed, too, that in Acts xiii. 10 Peter is represented as using the phrase 'right ways,' or 'straight ways,' in his denunciation of Elymas the sorcerer. The word 'way,' too, meets us very often in the O. T. story of Balaam (Num. xxii.). It is supposed by some that reference is made here to Balaam's counsel in the matter of tempting Israel to sensuality (Num. xxxi. 16). The definition given, however, in the last clause points rather to covetousness as the character in which Balaam is brought in. The lust of gain which Balaam formally denied was, as the tenor of the O. T. narrative clearly shows, the thing that shaped his action. The fact that in Rev. ii. 14, 15 the Nicolaitans are mentioned in connection with Balaam, leads some to the conclusion that Peter also had that party in his view here. Jude makes use of the cases of Cain and Korah as well as that of Balaam.

Ver. 16. **but he was rebuked for his transgression.** The phrase means literally, 'but he had a rebuke for his transgression.' The word used here for 'his' *may* mean 'his own,' and hence some suppose that it is emphatic here, the point being that he who was a prophet to others had himself to be rebuked for a trespass of his own. It is precarious, however, to assert such force for the word in the N. T. The transgression referred to is Balaam's yielding to curse Israel for the sake of gain, under the proviso that God's permission should not be withheld.—**the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, stayed the madness of the prophet.** The ass is designated here, and again in Matt. xxi. 5, by a general term which means simply a 'beast that bears the yoke,' or a 'beast of burden.' The 'madness' charged against Balaam is expressed by a term which is found only here, although the cognate verb appears in the 'as a fool' of 2 Cor. xi. 23. The 'forbade' of the A. V. does not fairly represent the sense of the original. The meaning is *prevented, checked*, or, as the R. V. very happily gives it, 'stayed.' The offence was interdicted, but not left uncommitted. It has been held by not a few that Peter gives an incorrect report of the O. T. narrative, in so far as the latter represents the angel, and not the ass, as uttering the rebuke. Peter, however, does not affirm that the rebuke was spoken by the ass. What he states is simply that the prophet was rebuked, and that the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, *stayed* his madness. And that the O. T. narrative represents the beast as bringing the prophet first to a stand is clear. The difficult questions about the credibility and interpretation of the story of Balaam belong, however, to the criticism and exegesis of the Old Testament. It is referred to by the writer of this Epistle as a story well known and accepted in his time, and furnishing a parallel, which all might understand and feel, to the terrible picture which he has been sketching.

CHAPTER II. 17–22.

The False Teachers further described.

17 THESE are [a] wells[1] [b] without water, [c] clouds[2] that are [d] carried[3] with a [e] tempest;[4] to whom the [f] mist[5] of
18 darkness is reserved[6] for ever.[7] For when they [g] speak[8] great [h] swelling words of [i] vanity, they [k] allure through[9] the [l] lusts of the flesh, through much [m] wantonness,[10] those that were
19 clean [n] escaped[11] from them who [o] live in [p] error. While they promise them [q] liberty, they themselves are the [r] servants of corruption: [12] for of whom[13] a man is [s] overcome, of the same
20 is he [t] brought in bondage. For if after they have [u] escaped

[a] Mk. v. 29; Jo. iv. 6, 14; Jas. iii. 11, 12; Rev. vii. 17.
[b] Mat. xii. 43; Jude 12; Jer. ii. 6.
[c] Job xxxviii. 9.
[d] Lu. viii. 29; Jas. iii. 4; 2 Pet. ii. 17.
[e] Mk. iv. 37; Lu. viii. 23; Jer. xxxii. 32.
[f] Ver. 4; Jude 13.
[g] Ver. 16
[h] Ex. xviii. 22; Jude 16.
[i] Rom. viii. 20; Eph. iv. 17.
[k] Ver. 14.
[l] Gal. v. 16; Eph. ii. 3; 1 Jo. ii. 16.
[m] Ver. 2.
[n] See refs. at ch. i. 4.
[o] Heb. xiii. 18.
[p] Rom. i. 27, iii. 17; Jude 11.
[q] 1 Cor. x. 29; Gal. ii. 4. v. 1, 13.
[r] Rom. viii. 21.
[s] Jo. viii. 34; 2 Cor. xii. 13; Rom. vi. 16.
[t] Gen. xv. 13; Acts vii. 6; Rom. vi. 18, 22; 1 Cor. vii. 15, ix. 19; Gal. iv. 3; Tit. ii. 3.
[u] See refs. at ch. i. 4.

[1] *or*, springs
[2] *rather, as in R. V.*, and mists
[3] driven
[4] *or*, whirlwind
[5] blackness
[6] *literally*, has been
[7] *omit* for ever
[8] *or*, for speaking
[9] in
[10] *literally*, by wantonnesses
[11] those who are just escaping, *as in R. V.*
[12] *rather*, promising them liberty, while they themselves are bond-servants of corruption
[13] *or*, of what

the [v] pollutions of the world, through [14] the [w] knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again [x] entangled therein, *and* [y] overcome,[15] the [z] latter end is [a] worse with them
21 than the beginning.[16] For it had been [b] better[17] for them not to have [c] known the [d] way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to [e] turn[18] from the [f] holy commandment
22 [g] delivered unto them. But[19] it is [h] happened unto them according to the [i] true proverb,[20] The [k] dog is [l] turned[21] to his own vomit again; and the [m] sow that was [n] washed to her[22] [o] wallowing in the [p] mire.

[v] Exek. xxxiii. 31.
[w] See refs. at ch. i. 2.
[x] Prov. xxviii. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 4.
[y] See refs. at ver. 19.
[z] Mat. xii. 45; Rev. ii. 19.
[a] Mat. ix. 16, xii. 45; 1 Tim. v. 8; Heb. x. 29.
[b] See refs. at 1 Pet. iii. 17.
[c] Col. i. 6; 1 Tim. iv. 3.
[d] Ver. 2.
[e] Lu. iii. 20; Acts viii. 25; Gal. i. 17; Heb. vii. 2.
[f] Rom. vii. 12.
[g] Acts xvi. 4; 1 Cor. xi. 2; Jude 3.
[h] See refs. at 1 Pet. iv. 12.
[i] Jo. x. 6, xvi. 25, 29; Prov. i. 1, etc.
[k] Mat. vii. 6; Lu. xvi. 21; Phil. iii. 22; Rev. xxii. 15.
[l] Mat. xii. 44; Gal. iv. 9; Jer. xi. 10.
[m] Prov. xi. 22.
[n] Jo. xiii. 10; Acts ix. 37, xvi. 33; Heb. x. 22; Rev. i. 5.
[o] Prov. ii. 18. Cf. also Mk. ix. 20.
[p] Jer. xlv. 6.

[14] *or*, in
[15] *or*, but having again become entangled in these, they are overcome
[16] *literally*, the last things have become to them worse than the first
[17] *or*, it were better
[18] *or*, turn back
[19] *omit* But
[20] *literally*, there has happened to them that of the true proverb
[21] *rather*, the dog turning again
[22] *omit* her

The description of the parties destined to spring up within the Church, which has been partially interrupted by the summary of Balaam's case, is resumed in direct terms. New points are pressed with the utmost sharpness. These are the deceitfulness of what is offered by the false teachers, and their position as apostates from the truth. It is upon this last fact that the chapter concentrates its force as it nears its close. What is meant by this state of apostasy is expressed in a few bold words which are endorsed by two familiar proverbs.

Ver. 17. **These are springs without water.** The noun is the same as that used of Jacob's *well* in John iv. 6. It means, however, a spring-well or fountain. It is possible that the figure points to the *apostasy* of the men 'who bear the semblance of teachers, just as, for a little time, a place in Eastern lands where water *has* flowed will continue green, but disappoint the thirsty traveller who may be led by a little verdure to hope for water' (Lumby). But it is rather in respect simply of the pretence which they make, and the deception which they practise, that they are likened to waterless springs. The force of the imagery, which has a special appropriateness in Eastern lands, will be seen by comparing those passages in which God Himself is designated a 'fountain of living waters' (Jer. ii. 13), or those in which men who turn from sin are likened to a 'spring of water, whose waters fail not' (Isa. lviii. 11); but best of all by comparing such passages as those in which the 'mouth of the righteous' is said to be as a 'well of life,' and the 'law of the wise' is described as 'a fountain of life' (Prov. x. 11, xiii. 14). See also the imagery used by Christ Himself in John iv. 10, 14, vii. 37.—**and mists driven by a storm.** The R. V. rightly follows the best critical authorities here in substituting for the 'clouds' of the A. V. a more expressive term (not found elsewhere in the New Testament) meaning 'mists' or 'mist-clouds.' The noun rendered 'storm' is the one which is applied to the 'storm' on the Lake in Mark iv. 37; Luke viii. 23 (its only other New Testament occurrences). It denotes properly a whirlwind sweeping upwards. Hence the aptness of the description 'driven,' not merely 'carried' as in the A. V. Wycliffe's rendering is very expressive—'mists driven with whirling winds.' It is doubtful, however, whether this second figure is intended to convey the idea that these false teachers are wanting in consistency (Huther). The point of comparison is simply the deceptiveness of what they offer. Like the drifting mist-clouds, presaging rain to refresh the earth and enrich the husbandman, which suddenly vanish and leave bitter disappointment to the expectant, when they are caught up by the tempest, so these teachers excite delusive hopes by lofty promises which leave nothing behind them. Compare the Old Testament figure—'whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain' (Prov. xxv. 14). See also Paul's figure in Eph. iv. 14.—**for whom the blackness of darkness has been reserved.** The best authorities omit the 'for ever' of the A. V. The phrase is the same as in Jude 13, and should, therefore, be rendered the 'blackness,' etc., not the 'mist,' etc. It asserts the Divine certainty, the hopelessness, the perpetuity of the doom of these apostates. Compare Jeremiah's description of the false prophets, whose 'way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness' (xxiii. 12). For the conception of the Divine judgment, whether of the righteous or of the unrighteous, as *reserved* or *prepared*, see also Matt. xxv. 34, 41; 1 Pet. i. 4, etc.

Ver. 18. **for speaking great swelling things of vanity.** The writer proceeds now to justify what he has just said, either as to the doom of the false teachers, or as to their character as pretenders and deceivers. The verb used for 'speaking' is one which occurs in the New Testament only in Acts iv. 18, and in these two verses (16, 18) of the present chapter. It usually expresses loud utterance, *e.g.* the scream of the eagle, the neighing of the horse, the speech of orators, the battle-cry of warriors, the recitative of a chorus. Hence its

fitness here in reference to men who indulge in **high**-sounding, empty, grandiloquent statements. **The** phrase rendered 'great swelling things' is **found** only here and in the parallel passage in **Jude.** It describes what is *over-large* or *immoderate*, and is applied in the late Classics to a *ponderous, verbose* style. As to the 'vanity,' see **note** on 1 Pet. i. 18. The noun occurs again **only** in Rom. viii. 20; Eph. iv. 17.—**they entice in the lusts of the flesh by wantonnesses.** The 'lusts of the flesh' (with which compare especially **the** Pauline formulæ, Gal. v. 16; Eph. ii. 3) are **the** sphere within which they live and act. The 'wantonnesses,' or 'acts of lasciviousness' (on **which** see 1 Pet. iv. 3), are the instruments which **they** use within that sphere. The action ascribed **to** them is that of enticing as with a *bait;* such is **the** force of the verb, the use of which in the New Testament is limited to those two verses in the present chapter (14, 18) and Jas. i. 14.—**those who are just escaping from them who live in error.** The A. V., following the Received Text, gives 'those that were clean escaped.' This reading must yield now to another which may be rendered 'who are *just* escaping' (so the R. V., etc.), or who 'are but a little way escaped' (Hofmann). By those 'who live in error' are to be understood not the false teachers themselves, but non-Christians generally. The phrase, too, best suits *heathens.* The guilt of those apostate teachers, therefore, is exhibited as aggravated by the fact that the persons whom they plied with the vile bait of sensual indulgence were those least fit to resist it, not men who were established in the new faith, but men who had but *recently* broken off from the ranks of heathenism, or who had as yet got but a few paces, as it were, in the process of separating themselves from their old pagan life. The verb used here for 'live' is the one which denotes the *manner* of life, the *conduct*, and is connected with the noun for 'life' or 'conversation,' which meets us most frequently in Peter (1 Pet. i. 15, 18, ii. 12, iii. 1, 2, 16; 2 Pet. ii. 7, iii. 11); occasionally in Paul (Gal. i. 13; Eph. iv. 22; 1 Tim. iv. 12); and elsewhere only in Heb. xiii. 7; Jas. iii. 13.

Ver. 19. **promising them liberty, they themselves being** (all the while) **bond-servants of corruption.** The loud-sounding engagement to give 'liberty,'—a new liberty worthy of man, would be one of the 'great swelling things of vanity,' one of the 'baits' with which they would ply the unwary. The *kind* of liberty to be given might be judged of, however, from the character of the pretended givers. From those who were themselves slaves of corruption what kind of liberty could come, but a liberty defiant of law, a liberty used 'for an occasion to the flesh' (Gal. v. 13)? It is doubtful whether even here the term rendered 'corruption' has the purely ethical sense of moral evil. Retaining the usual sense of 'destruction,' we should have the idea that only a liberty which tended to destruction could come from those who were themselves bound to the service of destruction.—**for of whom one has been overcome, to him has he been brought unto bondage** (or, **made a bond-servant**). A justification of the statement that these men are themselves *bond-servants* of corruption, or destruction. As the phrase states a general principle, some prefer to give it the form—'for of *what* one has been overcome, to *that* has he been made a bond-servant.' The same principle is affirmed by Christ Himself (John viii. 34), and by Paul (Rom. vi. 16). It is easy to see how the gospel doctrine of a new liberty through the truth (John viii. 32), and especially the Pauline teaching on the 'liberty of the children of God' (Rom. viii. 21), the liberty which exists wherever the Spirit of the Lord is (2 Cor. iii. 17), the liberty 'wherewith Christ hath made us free' (Gal. v. 1), might be misinterpreted and turned to licence. But it may be, as Dean Plumptre suggests, that the dangerous cry for liberty, and the pretentious teaching on the subject, which are referred to in the Epistles, found their peculiar occasion in the restrictions imposed by the Convention at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 29), and aimed at securing freedom not only from the things from which that Convention relieved the Gentile Christians, but also from the abstinence which was enjoined from 'meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from *fornication.*'

Ver. 20. **For if, having escaped the pollutions of the world in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but having been again entangled in these, they are overcome, the last things have become to them worse than the first.** To whom does this description apply? Some (*e.g.* Bengel, Hofmann, etc.) take the persons in view to be the dupes of the false teachers. Beyond the fact, however, that the same term 'escaped' is used here as in ver. 18, there is little to favour so remarkable a change from object to subject. The false teachers themselves are still the subjects, and what is affirmed of them is a state of relapse into the 'pollutions' (the word is peculiar to this passage, although another form of it occurs in ver. 10) of heathenism from which they had once separated themselves. In terms unmistakeably recalling, if not literally repeating, our Lord's own words in Matt. xii. 45, that state of relapse is declared to be worse than their original state of paganism—worse because no longer excused by 'ignorance' (cf. 1 Pet. i. 14). The expression 'entangled' is a strong and significant one, being used *e.g.* by Æschylus of being entangled in the *net of ruinous infatuation* (Prom. 1079). It is in admirable harmony, therefore, with the previous '*entice* in the lusts of the flesh' (ver. 18). The 'knowledge' of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ which is attributed here to these apostates is the same kind of knowledge as has been already spoken of in chap. i. 2, 3, 8. Hence it is urged that the statement is entirely antagonistic to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, and indeed that there is, 'perhaps, no single passage in the whole extent of New Testament teaching more crucial than this in its bearing on the Calvinistic dogma of the indefectibility of grace' (Plumptre). The bearing of the passage, however, upon that doctrine is by no means so definite and absolute. It institutes a solemn comparison between two different conditions of the same individuals. It contrasts two different stages of impure living, and pronounces the one worse than the other. But beyond that it does not go, neither can it be regarded as of decisive importance in regard to the different views of grace advocated by different schools of theology. The whole statement is introduced simply in confirmation of what was said in the previous verse of the bondage in which those live who are overcome of sin.

Ver. 21. **For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.** The 'better' here, as in 1 Pet. iii. 17 (see note there), means *more to their advantage*. The 'way of righteousness' is not quite the same as 'the Gospel,' or 'the way of salvation.' It is a term for Christianity specifically on its ethical side, as a new moral life. Other phrases, such as 'the way of truth,' describe it more definitely on its doctrinal side. The 'holy commandment' is not to be limited either to the commandment known as the 'new commandment' (John xiii. 34), or to the Sermon on the Mount. It is the ethical requirement of the Gospel as a whole, the law of life which Christ has left. Here, too, the description moves entirely within the sphere of character, and resembles the picture given by Christ Himself of two moral states, in His parable of the unclean spirit and the seven more wicked spirits (Matt. xii. 43–45).

Ver. 22. **There has happened unto them that of the true proverb.** Two proverbial sayings follow. As having the same import, however, they are dealt with as if they made but one. The term is the one which is applied to the Proverbs of Solomon by the Greek Version of the Old Testament. It means any kind of common saying or saw, however; and in the New Testament it occurs only here and in John's Gospel (x. 6, xvi. 25, 29, where it is translated both *parable* and *proverb*). Instead of the simple expression 'the true proverb,' we have the periphrasis 'that of the true proverb,' or 'the *matter* of the true proverb,' as it might be rendered; a form found also in the later Classics, as well as elsewhere in the New Testament (Matt. xxi. 21; cf. also Matt. viii. 33, xvi. 23; Rom. viii. 5). The 'but' which the A. V. introduces is not sufficiently supported.— **A dog turning again to his own vomit.** So the original gives the proverb in the abrupt form of a participle without a finite verb. The word 'vomit' occurs only here. In Prov. xxvi. 11 we have a saying apparently so similar to this, that it has been usual to speak of Peter as quoting it here. The actual terms in the original, however, differ so much as to make it more probable that he was simply repeating a well-known popular maxim.— **and, A sow having washed herself, to wallowing in the mire.** The reading varies between two forms of the term rendered 'wallowing,' one of which would mean the wallowing-*place*, the other (which is the better attested) the *act* of wallowing. The term occurs only here, and the same is the case with that for 'mire.' This second proverb has no definite parallel in the Old Testament, and is taken, therefore, from the mouth of the people. Compare, however, the comparison of a 'fair woman without discretion' to a 'jewel of gold in a swine's snout' (Prov. xi. 22), and our Lord's word, 'neither cast ye your pearls before swine' (Matt. vii. 6). Compare also Horace's 'he would have lived a filthy dog, or a hog delighting in mire' (*Epistles*, Book i. 2, line 26). The repute of the dog and the sow, not only in Judea but generally throughout the East, is well known. The former, as an unclean animal and the scavenger of Oriental towns, became a term of reproach, a name for one's enemies (Ps. xxii. 16, 20), a figure of the profane or impure (Rev. xxii. 15; cf. also Matt. xv. 26; Mark vii. 27). The latter was forbidden to be eaten not only among the Jews, but also among the Arabs, the Phœnicians, and other Eastern nations. To the priests of Egypt, too, swine's flesh was the most hateful of all meats. If these verses are pressed, as is often the case, into the controversy on the nature of grace as indefectible or otherwise, the two proverbs would certainly favour the Calvinistic view rather than the Arminian. For their point is, that the nature of the creatures was not changed, but that each, after a temporary separation, returned to the impurity which was according to its nature. So the idea is taken to amount to this—'Let us not be stumbled or dismayed. "The sure foundation of God" has not given way. These wretched men were never what they professed to be. They had, indeed, undergone a process of external reformation; but it was external merely, their heart all the while remaining unchanged, "like the washing of a swine, which you may make clean, but can never make cleanly"' (Lillie). But in point of fact these doctrinal questions are not fairly in view here.

CHAPTER III. 1–10.

Warnings against prospective Deniers of Christ's Advent.

1 THIS second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you;[1] in
both which[2] I [a]stir up your [b]pure[3] [c]minds[4] by way of
2 [d]remembrance;[5] that ye may be [e]mindful of the words[6]
which were [f]spoken before by the [g]holy prophets, and of the
[h]commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:[7]

[a] See refs. at ch. i 13. [b] Phil. i. 10. [c] See refs. at 1 Pet i. 13. [d] See refs. at ch. i. 13. [e] Jude 17. [f] Rom. ix. 29; Gal. i. 9; Heb. iv. 7; Jude 17. [g] Lu. i. 70; Acts iii. 21. [h] Mat. v. 19, xv. 3; Jo. xiii. 34, xiv. 15, 21; Rom. vii. 8, 9, 20; 1 Jo. ii. 3, 4, 7, 8, iii. 22, 23, etc.

[1] *rather, as in R. V.*, This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you [2] *literally*, in which [3] *or*, sincere [4] mind [5] in reminding (you) [6] that ye should remember the words [7] *literally*, and your apostles' commandment of the Lord and Saviour; *or, with R. V.*, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles

3 [t] knowing this first, that there shall come in the [h] last days[8] scoffers,[9] [i] walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is
4 the promise of his [m] coming? for since[10] the [n] fathers [o] fell asleep, all things [p] continue as *they* were[11] [q] from the beginning
5 of the creation. For this they [r] willingly are ignorant of,[12] that by the [s] word of God the heavens were [t] of old, and the earth [u] standing out of the water[13] and in the water:[14]
6 whereby[15] the world that then was, being [v] overflowed with
7 water, perished: but the [w] heavens and the earth which are now,[16] by the same word are [x] kept in store, [y] reserved unto [z] fire against the [a] day of judgment[17] and [b] perdition[18] of
8 [c] ungodly men. But, beloved, be not [d] ignorant of this one thing,[19] that [e] one day *is* [f] with the Lord as a thousand years,
9 and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not [g] slack[20] concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is [h] long-suffering to us-ward, not [i] willing that any should
10 [k] perish, but that all should [l] come to repentance. But the [m] day of the Lord will [n] come as a [o] thief in the night;[21] in the which the heavens shall [p] pass away with a great[22] noise, and the [q] elements[23] shall [r] melt with [s] fervent heat,[24] the earth also, and the [t] works[25] that are therein, shall be [u] burned up.[26]

[i] Ch. i. 20.
[k] See refs. at 1 Pet. i. 5.
[l] Jude 16, 18.
[m] See refs. at ch. i. 16.
[n] Lu. i. 72, xi. 48; Jo. vi. 31, 58, vii. 52; Acts iii. 13, vii. 10, xiii. 32, xxvi. 6; Rom. ix. 5, xi. 28, xv. 8; Heb. i. 1.
[o] Mat. xxvii. 52; Acts vii. 60; 1 Thes. iv. 13, etc.
[p] Lu. i 22, xxii. 28; Gal. ii. 5; Heb i. 11.
[q] Mk. x. 6, xiii. 19. Cf. also Rom. i. 20.
[r] Col. ii. 18.
[s] Heb. i. 3, vi. 5, xi. 3.
[t] Ch. ii. 3.
[u] Col. i. 17.
[v] Ps. lxxviii. 20.
[w] 2 Cor. viii. 14; 1 Tim iv. 8.
[x] Mat. vi. 19, 20; Lu. xii. 21; Rom. ii. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; 2 Cor. xii. 14; Jas. v. 3; Mic. vi. 10.
[y] See refs. at ch. ii. 4.

[a] Jude 13. [a] See refs. at ch ii. 9. [b] Ver. 16; Rom ix. 22; Phil. i. 28, iii. 19, etc. [c] Ch. ii. 5; Jude 4; Rom. iv. 5, v. 6; 1 Tim. i. 9; 1 Pet. iv. 18. [d] Ver. 5. [e] Ps. xc. 4. [f] Mat. xix. 26; Lu. ii. 52; 1 Pet. ii. 4, 20, iii. 8; Jas. i. 17. [g] 1 Tim. iii. 15; Deut. vii. 10. [h] Mat. xviii. 26, 29; Lu. xviii. 7; 1 Cor. xiii. 4; 1 Thes. v. 14; Heb. vi. 15; Jas. v. 7, 8. [i] 1 Cor. xii. 11; Heb. vi. 17; Jas. i. 18. [k] Mat. x. 28; Rom. xiv. 15; 1 Cor. viii. 11, xv. 18; Jas. iv. 12. [l] Mat. xv. 17. [m] Joel ii. 31; Acts ii. 20; 1 Thes. v. 2. [n] Lu. xiii. 35; Jo. ii. 4. [o] 1 Thes. v. 2. [p] Mat. v. 18, xxiv. 34, 35; 2 Cor. v. 17; Jas. i. 10. [q] Ver. 12; Gal. iv. 3, 9; Col. ii. 8, 20; Heb. v. 12. [r] Vers. 11, 12; Jo. ii. 19; Eph. ii. 14; 1 Jo. iii. 8; Rev. i. 19. [s] Ver. 12. [t] Heb. i. 10, iv. 3. [u] Ezek. xx. 47; Mat. iii. 12; Rev. viii. 7.

[8] *literally*, in the last of the days [9] *rather*, mockers in mockery
[10] from the day when [11] *literally*, continue thus
[12] *rather, as in R. V.*, for this they wilfully forget; *literally*, for this escapes them of their own will
[13] *better, as in R. V.*, that there were heavens of old, and an earth compacted out of water [14] and by means of water, *or, as in R. V.*, and amidst water
[15] by means of which [16] but the heavens which now are, and the earth
[17] *or*, have been treasured up for fire, reserved unto the day of judgment
[18] destruction [19] *or*, But let not this one thing escape you, beloved,
[20] *or*, tardy [21] *omit* in the night [22] *or*, rushing
[23] *or, as in margin of R. V.*, heavenly bodies
[24] *literally*, being scorched up shall be dissolved
[25] and the earth and the works [26] *or*, shall be discovered

It has been supposed by some that the opening words of this third chapter indicate the beginning of a new Epistle. What we have, however, is only the beginning of a new division of the same Epistle. The great subject now is that 'power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,' of which the writer has spoken in chap. i. 16. He has already expressed his concern to see his readers firmly established in this great expectation. He has given them to understand that the last labours of his life were to be directed to this end. He now makes plain the reason which he had for his great anxiety on the subject. He knew that this truth of the Lord's Second Advent was to be assailed by the keen shafts of mockery and scorn. Wishful to see his readers armed against the scoffer, in this first half of the chapter he predicts the rise of this subtle temptation, describes the form which it will assume, and refutes the reasoning which it employs.

Ver. 1. **This is now, beloved, a second epistle that I write unto you.** The sentence might be rendered literally thus: 'This already second epistle, beloved, I write unto you.' The expression seems to imply that a comparatively short time had elapsed since he wrote them before. This is referred to as an 'evidence of his affectionate solicitude, as well as of the importance and urgency of the subject-matter' (Lillie). The First Epistle is thus incidentally claimed to be by

the same hand. The author prefaces what he has now to say about the scoffers of the last days by a personal statement, as was the case also with the solemn affirmation made in chap. i. 12–15. The Epistle also deepens notably in the loving urgency of its tone, as it now approaches its conclusion. Hence the repeated appeals to the readers as 'beloved' which distinguish this chapter (vers. 1, 8, 14, 17).—**in which**; that is to say, 'in which Epistles,' or 'in both which.' The plural relative is used, as if the First Epistle as well as the Second had been specified.—**I stir up your sincere mind in reminding** (or, *in the way of reminder*). On the formula see Note on chap. i. 13. The adjective rendered 'pure' by the A. V. occurs only once again in the N. T., viz. in Phil. i. 10, where the A. V. translates it 'sincere,' as the R. V. does here. It is derived by some from a root expressive of the *clear splendour* of sunlight; by others from a root denoting that which is *parcelled off* by itself; by others still from one signifying that which is purified by *rolling* or *shaking*. It seems to mean primarily *unmixed, distinct*. The cognate noun is found three times in the N. T. (1 Cor. v. 8; 2 Cor. i. 12, ii. 17). The term has a definite ethical sense in the N. T., which goes beyond anything it has in Classical Greek. With a near approach to a complete account Archbishop Trench defines it as a grace which 'will exclude all double-mindedness, the divided heart (Jas. i. 8, iv. 8), the eye not single (Matt. vi. 22), all hypocrisies (1 Pet. ii. 1).' While the A. V. gives the plural 'minds,' the original has the singular 'mind.' On the word itself see Note on 1 Pet. i. 13.

Ver. 2. **in order that ye may remember the words spoken before by the holy prophets.** The importance of the testimony of prophecy (obviously here O. T. prophecy, and specially those sections of it which spoke of the Advent of Messiah) is again pressed, as was already the case in chap. i. 19, etc. In the parallel passage of Jude (ver. 17, etc.) this reference to prophecy, which is so characteristic of Peter, does not appear.—**and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour by your apostles.** Instead of the pronoun of the first person which leads to the rendering of the A. V., 'the commandment of *us* the apostles of the Lord and Saviour,' the best authorities give the pronoun of the second person. We thus get a sentence which is variously translated. Some, *e.g.*, render it 'your commandment of the Lord of the apostles,' meaning by that 'the commandment given you by Him who is the Lord of the apostles.' Others put it thus: 'your commandment of the apostles, of the Lord,' that is to say, 'your commandment, which the apostles, nay, the Lord Himself, gave.' Literally, however, it may be rendered, 'and your apostles' commandment of the Lord and Saviour,' *i.e.* the commandment given by the Lord and Saviour, and made known to you by your apostles. This is sufficiently in harmony with the parallel in Jude 17, and yields on the whole the most pertinent sense. The expression 'your apostles' may point to Paul and those who were united with him in the original evangelization of these parts. The 'commandment' means here neither the Gospel generally (which is a sense too broad for it); nor the particular injunction directed by Christ against false teachers in such passages as Matt. vii. 15, xxiv. 5, 11 (which is too narrow a sense); far less the preaching of the prophecies as a charge committed to the apostles (Dietlein). It has substantially the sense which it had in chap. ii. 21, —the new evangelical law of life, or the Gospel on its ethical side. The only difference is that, as the great subject now in hand is the frivolous denial of the likelihood of Christ's Return to earth, this new evangelical law of life is presented specially in its opposition to the kind of life to which such a denial served as a temptation.

Ver. 3. **knowing this first**; the same formula, with the same force, as in chap. i. 20.—**that in the last of the days**; so it should be rendered, in accordance with a reading which is preferred by the best critical editors. That followed by the A. V., though it is translated 'in the last days,' would mean literally 'at the end of the days,' and is not altogether identical with the other. On these phrases see Note on 1 Pet. i. 5. Here the 'last of the days' mean the times immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ, and immediately introducing the Messianic Age, otherwise described as the 'age to come.' That new Messianic Age of the Church had begun, indeed, to enter with Christ's First Coming, but was to enter finally with that Second Coming which the quick faith of the first believers realized as nigh at hand.—**mockers shall come in mockery.** This longer reading has documentary support which is not to be resisted. The A. V., by omitting the phrase 'in mockery,' which is quite in consonance with the Hebraic cast of much else in the Petrine Epistles, strips the statement of its most graphic stroke. When these mockers come, they will come in character. Both nouns are unusual in the N. T., the former occurring again only in Jude 18, the latter (although another form of the same is found in Heb. xi. 36) only here.—**walking after their own lusts.** The expression is a very strong one. The 'lusts' are described as *their very own*, and as the one rule or aim recognised in their life. The lustful life and the scoffing voice are not associated here without a purpose. Sensuality and faith, coarse self-indulgence and clear spiritual apprehension, cannot coexist. The mocking spirit is the sister or child of the unclean spirit. It is to be noticed that this passage is made use of in a treatise attributed to Hippolytus, 'unquestionably the most learned member of the Roman Church' in the early part of the third century.

Ver. 4. **and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?** The 'coming' is again expressed here by the word *parousia*, 'presence;' as to which see on chap. i. 16. The question, put with triumphant scorn by these mockers, repeats the cherished terms used by believers—the 'promise' in which they trusted, the 'coming' which they looked for with vivid expectancy, the very form ('*His* Coming,' not '*Christ's* Coming,' or the '*Lord's* Coming') in which they were accustomed to refer to Him who was so much the one object of their thoughts as to need no identification by name among them. 'Those who believe,' says Bengel, 'having the heart filled with the memory of the Lord, easily supply the name.' John repeatedly exhibits this style of reference to the common Lord of Christians, without naming the name, *e.g.* 1 John ii. 6, iii. 3, 5, 7, 16, iv. 17; 3 John 7. With the scornful incredulity expressed in the question compare such O. T. passages as Isa. v. 19, Mal. ii. 17, which record similar gibes

flung out against the words of the prophets in the ancient Israel. For the interrogative form, which imparts the tone of mocking triumph to the denial, compare also Ps. xlii. 3, lxxix. 10; Jer. xvii. 15. —**for from the day when the fathers fell asleep all things continue thus from the beginning of the creation.** These words indicate how the scoffers will reason out their rejection of the promise. Their argument will be taken from the delay in the fulfilment of 'that blessed hope' (Tit. ii. 13) of the Christian brotherhood, and from the unbroken uniformity of things. The idea seems to be that, taking it for granted that some great disturbance in the system of the world will be necessarily involved in such an event as the Advent of Christ, and failing to see any signs of an interruption in the old order, they will deride the event itself. The precise force of the terms, however, and the exact relation in which the several parts of the sentence stand to each other, are very differently interpreted. The 'fathers' are variously understood as the patriarchs of the human race, the patriarchs of the Jewish nation, all those to whom the promise was given, the men of the first Christian generation, or generally those who preceded each particular generation. Undoubtedly it would be most natural, did other things permit, to suppose that the patriarchs of *Israel* were meant; in which sense the phrase 'the fathers' occurs, *e.g.*, in Rom. ix. 5; Heb. i. 1. But as the writer speaks here of a state of things which belongs still to the future, and as the fact that the O. T. patriarchs died before the fulfilment of the promise of the Lord's Return would be a strange argument for these mockers to urge against the Christian hope, it seems necessary to understand by 'the fathers' here those who stood in a relation to the Christian Church resembling that occupied by the Jewish patriarchs to the Church of Israel. The first generation of Christian believers received this promise (Acts i. 11, etc.), and lived in the hope of its sure and speedy fulfilment. They died without witnessing that, and this would be used with their children as an argument for discrediting the promise itself. The second specification of time seems to be added in order to give emphasis to the first, and to exhibit in the strongest possible form the constancy of the natural order of things. The meaning is the same as if the sentence had taken this more regular form: 'In spite of this promise, your fathers to whom it was given have passed away, and all things still continue the same since then, as indeed they have continued from their first creation.' Greater vivacity is added to the assertion of unbroken uniformity by the use of the present tense 'continue' (the verb itself also is a compound form expressing continuance persisting through an indefinite length of time), and by the simple 'thus' by which the idea of 'as they are,' or 'as we see them,' is conveyed. The A. V. tames down the abrupt confidence of the utterance by inserting the words *as they were* after the 'continue.' The phrase 'fell asleep' (with which compare John xi. 11; Acts vii. 60, xiii 36; 1 Cor. xv. 6, 18, 20; 1 Thess. iv. 14, etc.) is now to be noticed. The expression, frequent as it is in the Pauline writings, is found only this once in Peter. On the lips of scoffers here it may be, as is supposed by some (*e.g.* Lillie), another instance of 'ironical accommodation to the dialect of faith and of the hope of the resurrection.' The comparison of death to sleep is one which lies near at hand, and is by no means peculiar to Scripture. In Homer (*Il.* xiv. 231, xvi. 672, 682) Sleep and Death are twins 'of winged race, of matchless speed but silent pace,' and the goddess Aphrodité is represented as hasting over the sea to the island of Lemnos in quest of the cave of Death's half-brother, Sleep. In the literature of many nations sleep is recognised as 'death's image.' What is peculiar to the New Testament use of the natural figure (and in part also to its Old Testament use) is the new conceptions with which Revelation has filled it—the hopeful conceptions of rest, continued life, and, above all, reawakening in newness of energy. So to the Christian the grave has become the *cemetery*, *i.e.* the dormitory or sleeping-place. 'All the bodily pains, all the wants of human sympathy and carefulness, all the suddenness of the wrench from life, in the midst of health and strength, all this shall not prevent the Christian's death from deserving no harsher name than that of *sleep*' (T. Arnold).

Ver. 5. **For this escapes them of their own will.** So may the sentence be trans'ated literally. The rendering of the A. V., 'for this they willingly are ignorant of,' is somewhat weak. Better is that of the R. V., 'for this they wilfully forget.' The 'this' then refers to the fact which is to be stated immediately. Some good interpreters (including Schott, Huther, etc.) suppose, however, that the 'this' refers to the preceding question of the scoffers, and give the sense thus: 'for, while they assert this, it escapes them that,' etc. But the sense of *asserting* which is thus put upon the word rendered 'of their own will' (literally 'willing it'), though found in extra-Biblical Greek, seems to be strange to the N. T. . . . The 'for' by which the statement is introduced shows that it is given in explanation of the mockers venturing to speak as they do. The point then is this: 'they speak so, because they wilfully forget such a break in the constancy of nature as that caused by the Deluge.' Or it may be in refutation of their reasoning, the point then being: 'this argument from the unbroken uniformity of things is but the argument of scoffers, for, though they may choose to forget it, that uniformity has been already disturbed by one great catastrophe, and therefore may be by another.'—**that there were heavens from of old**; that is, from the very beginning of things. The A. V. makes it '*the* heavens.' But the article is wanting in the original.—**and an earth**; not '*the* earth' as the A. V. again puts it.—**compacted out of water and through water.** The idea here is by no means clear, and the renderings consequently vary considerably. The A. V. is in error in supposing the words to refer to the *position* of the earth, and in making it, therefore, 'standing out of the water and in the water.' In this it has so far followed Tyndale and the Genevan, who give 'the earth that was in the water appeared up out of the water.' Wycliffe has 'the earth of water was standing by water.' The Rhemish Version comes much nearer the sense when it translates the clause, 'the earth out of water and through water consisting.' The verb means *brought together, made solid, compacted* (as the R. V. puts it), or *consisting* (as it is rendered by the A. V. in Col. i. 17, and in its marginal note in the present passage). What is in view, therefore, in the phrase 'out of water,' is not the situation

occupied by the earth, nor merely the fact that the earth was made to rise out of the waters in which it lay buried during chaos (so Hofmann, Schott, Bengel, etc.), but the material out of which an earth was constructed at first. The second phrase is taken even by the R. V. to refer to the *position* of the earth, and is accordingly rendered 'amidst water.' And this may seem to be supported by such passages as Ps. xxiv. 2, cxxxvi. 6. Most naturally and literally, however, the phrase means 'through' or 'by means of' water. And this sense is in sufficient accordance with what was in all probability in the writer's mind, namely, the account of creation in the Book of Genesis. That record represents water as in a certain sense both the *material* and the *instrumentality* employed in the original formation of an earth out of chaos, or at least as both the element *out* of which and the element by the *agency* of which the dry land was brought to light. It is far-fetched to suppose that the writer is speaking in terms not of the Mosaic record, but of some of the popular or philosophical cosmogonies of the time. 'Quite in harmony with the account in Genesis he regards the heavens and the earth in their original form as proceeding by the creative Word of God from the waters of chaos (Gen. i. 2), and this in such a way that the origin of the heavens was brought about by the separation of the waters (vers. 7, 8), and the origin of the land by the gathering together of the waters (vers. 9, 10)' (Weiss, *Bib. Theol.* ii. p. 224, Clark's Trans.).—**by the word of God.** In reference to the 'God said' of the Mosaic record, and resembling the statement in Heb. xi. 3, but not equivalent to the ultimate identification of the creative word with the personal Word or Son which we have in John (i. 3; as also in Heb. i. 2). The final explanation of the origin of the earth, therefore, was to be sought not in the water, much as that had to do with it, but in the expressed Will of a Creator. From this Will the 'all things' at first received their form, and upon it they depended for the constancy and permanence to which the scoffers would appeal. The relation in which this statement on the formation of a heaven and an earth in the beginning stands to what follows, is somewhat uncertain. The connection of thought may be that, as they owed their first construction to the Word of God, they owe their continuance entirely to the same Word of God, and their present constancy, therefore, is no argument against their being yet broken in upon by the Lord's Advent. Or it may be that the origination of the existing heaven and earth out of the prior chaos is itself adduced, before even the Deluge is referred to, as an instance, which ought to be well known to these scoffers, of that change in the established order of things which they will wish to deny. Or, as is supposed by many, the point may be that there was at least one vast inroad upon the apparently changeless system of the world of which these parties could not be ignorant, but by wilful purpose, namely the Deluge; and that the very element which the Word of God used in first preparing that solid earth and 'all things' was employed by the same word in destroying them.

Ver. 6. **whereby the then world being flooded with water perished.** The term used for 'world' here is the one (*cosmos*) which describes it as a system of order and beauty, and presents it (in distinction from another term *aeon*, which deals with it under the aspect of time) under the aspect of space. It has a wide variety of application in the N. T., being equivalent, *e.g.*, sometimes to the whole material universe (Matt. xiii. 35; John xvii. 5, xxi. 25; Acts xvii. 4; Rom. i. 20), sometimes to man's world or the system of things of which he is the centre (John xvi. 21; 1 Cor. xiv. 10; 1 John iii. 17), sometimes to the totality of men occupying that system (John i. 29, iv. 42; 2 Cor. v. 19), and sometimes to the 'world' in the ethical sense of the totality of men living without God and outside His kingdom (John i. 10; 1 Cor. i. 20, 21; Jas. iv. 4; 1 John iii. 13). Here the phrase need not be restricted to the idea of the world of *men*, or of *living creatures*, but may cover the whole order of things, with the men occupying it, which existed prior to the Deluge. As the participle, which is rendered 'overflowed' by both the A. V. and the R. V., is a form cognate to the noun for 'flood' (*e.g.* in chap. ii. 5), it should be translated 'flooded' here. When it is said that the 'then world, *perished*, it is obvious that the meaning is not that it was annihilated, but that it was broken up, had its 'order' destroyed, and was reduced to another form. The verb is the one for which the advocates of *annihilation* or *conditional immortality*, as the Scripture doctrine of the end of the unrighteous, claim the sense of absolute destruction, or final extinction—a sense not accordant with such occurrences as the present. The main difficulty here, however, is in the statement of the *means* by which this *perishing* came upon the old world. The 'whereby' of the A. V. represents a plural relative, 'by means of which things,' the antecedent to which is not apparent. Some take *it* to refer to the 'heavens' and the 'earth,' the idea then being either that the antediluvian world of living creatures was destroyed by the heavens and the earth uniting to overflow them with their waters (Hofmann, Beza, Fronmüller, etc.), or that the material system perished by means of the very things of which it consisted, in so far as the heavens and the earth, which made its constituents, broke up (Bede). Others (Calvin, Lumby, etc.) suppose it to refer to the before-mentioned 'water,' the writer using the plural relative instead of the singular, because he had in his mind the two several relations of water, as substance and as instrument, to the formation of the old world, or the two several waters, namely, those from above the firmament and those from beneath. In support of this interpretation (which on the whole is the most widely accepted) appeal is made to the Mosaic record, which represents the windows of heaven as opening as well as the fountains of the great deep as being broken up. On the analogy of the indefinite 'whereunto' in 1 Pet. ii. 8, some give the 'whereby' here the general sense of 'by means of which circumstances,' or 'in consequence of which arrangement of things.' Probably the best explanation, however, is to regard the relative as referring to the two things last mentioned, viz. the *water* and the *Word of God*; the point then being this, that the old and seemingly constant order of things perished by being overwhelmed with water, the agents of the destruction being the agents that first formed our earth and heavens, namely, the creative word of God and the element of water on which it acted. And this unquestionable fact was sufficient refutation of the argument from all things having continued without change since the beginning of the creation.

Ver. 7. but the heavens which now are and the earth by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved unto the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly men. The 'which now are' is in direct antithesis to 'the then world.' The form of the phrase also indicates that the *world* of which the writer has been speaking consists in his view of both heavens and earth. Instead of 'by the *same* word' there is another reading, 'by *His* word,' which is also weightily attested. But the sense is practically the same, namely, that the same creative Word of God which first made the old heavens and earth, and afterwards overwhelmed the order of things which it had constructed, is still the sovereign agency that maintains the present heavens and earth and prepares for them their future destiny. The 'stored up' gives the same idea as in the '*treasurest up* unto thyself wrath,' etc., in Rom. ii. 5. The 'for fire' admits of being connected either with the 'stored up' or with the 'reserved,' but on the whole more naturally with the former as in the R. V., than with the latter as in the A. V. As to the 'reserved' see on 1 Pet. i. 4, and 2 Pet. ii. 4. The idea of 'perdition,' as the A. V. puts it, or 'destruction,' as the R. V. gives it, is expressed by the noun connected with the verb 'perished' in the previous verse, and has the same sense. The subjects of this 'judgment and perdition' are described definitely as '*the* ungodly men,' the article pointing either to the mockers who are in the writer's mind all through, or serving simply to mark off from men generally one particular class, namely, that of the *ungodly* or *impious*. As to the epithet see on 1 Pet. iv. 18; 2 Pet. ii. 5.—This statement on the destiny of the present system of things is the fullest and most precise of its kind in the N. T. It has parallels so far in the N. T. doctrine, in such passages as Matt. v. 18, 24, 29; 1 Cor. iii. 13; 2 Thess. i. 8; Heb. xii. 27; Rev. xxi. 1. In speaking of fire as the agent in the second judicial destruction of the world, as water was in the first, it founds on the history of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as typical of the final judgment of the impious, and on the O. T. conception of God as accompanied by fire when He comes forth to judge (Ps. l. 3, xcvii. 3; Isa. lxvi. 15, 16, 24; Dan. vii. 9, 10). Other O. T. passages (*e.g.* Ps. cii. 26, 27; Job xiv. 12; Isa. xxxiv. 4, li. 6, lxvi. 22) speak more generally of the passing away of the present system. And as the O. T. for the most part connects that event with the judgments of Jehovah and the day of His 'recompense,' Peter connects it with the day of Christ's Coming. 'The present form of the world is protected by God's word of promise (Gen. ix. 11) against any recurring flood. Yet if it, too, is to perish, there remains now only fire as the element to bring about this destruction; and as, on the ground of Old Testament representations, the wrathful judgment of God is regarded as a consuming fire, it is easy to think that the destruction of the world resulting from the day of judgment will be brought about by fire in a special sense, for which this present form of the world is, so to speak, reserved' (Weiss, *Bib. Theol.* ii. pp. 246, 247, Clark's Trans.).

Ver. 8. But let not this one thing escape you, beloved; the mode of expression which has been already used in reference to the mockers in ver. 5. The writer passes now from the idea of the supposed constancy of the order of things to that of the apparent delay in the realization of the promise. He calls the attention of his readers first to a single fact, the difference between the Divine measure of duration and the human, which would be sufficient refutation of the scornful incredulity of such scoffers.—**that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.** As the writer seems to make use of the words of the 90th Psalm here, the designation 'the Lord,' both in this verse and in the next, should be taken in its Old Testament sense, and, therefore, not as = Christ, but as = God or Jehovah, without reference to the personal distinctions which belong to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. While the Psalmist (Ps. xc. 4), however, speaks simply of a thousand years as being in Jehovah's sight 'as yesterday when it is past,' Peter throws the statement into a form which presents also the converse truth that one day is as a thousand years, if a thousand years are as one day. His object is not to exhibit the brevity of human life over against the eternity of God, as is the case with the Psalmist, but to express how inapplicable to God are all those ideas of time, those estimates of long and short, of hasting and delay, by which man measures things. The O. T. view of the eternity of God, however, is not merely this comparatively abstract idea of everlasting duration, which seems to be on the surface of the Psalmist's words, but the deeper idea of changelessness of being which makes God the object of His people's fearless trust. 'Whilst God as Jehovah is the eternal, God's eternity is defined as the unchangeableness of His being, persisting throughout every change of time, and thus it becomes the basis of human confidence. Therefore Moses, in the midst of the dying away of his people, addresses God as the Eternal One, Ps. xc. 1; therefore, Deut. xxxii. 40, the idea that God is eternal forms the transition to the announcement that He will again save his rejected people; therefore Israel, when sighing in misery, is comforted, Isa. xl. 28: "knowest thou not, and hast thou not heard, that Jehovah is an eternal God?"' (Oehler). Hence, while Peter meets the scorner by asserting God to be superior in all His modes of action to human reckonings of time, he also exhibits the ground of His people's continued faith in Himself and His promise through postponements of their hope.

Ver. 9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness. The apparent delay in the performance of the Divine engagement is capable of a still more assuring explanation. It has a gracious purpose. Some construe the sentence thus—'the Lord of the promise is not slack,' etc. But this is less satisfactory. The 'slack' here (the verb occurs only once again, in 1 Tim. iii. 15, where it is rendered 'tarry') means tardy, dilatory, late. With the idea compare Hab. ii. 3.—**as some count slackness.** The persons referred to are supposed by some to be still the false teachers. In view of the very general nature of the statement, others, with more reason, deem them to be believers of weak spiritual perception, or doubtful faith. Simple as the words seem, the precise point of the clause is not quite clear. It may be understood in the more definite sense—'as some consider *it* (that is, the Lord's mode of action in relation to the promise) to be slackness.' Or it may be taken more generally thus—'as

some explain slackness,' or, 'according to the ideas which some form of slackness.'—**but is long-suffering to you-ward.** The reading adopted by the R. V., 'to *you*-ward,' or *in relation to you*, is much better attested than the 'to *us*-ward' of the A. V. It is also more in Peter's style, and gives greater force to his explanation, bringing it home immediately to his readers themselves. This conception of the Divine 'long-suffering,' which is so frequent in the Old Testament, is prominent in the Pauline writings (cf. such passages as Rom. ii. 4, ix. 22, 1 Tim. i. 16). It appears a second time in this same chapter (ver. 15), and also in 1 Pet. iii. 20. When a human promise fails to be fulfilled according to expectation, those to whom it has been made are in the habit of attributing the delay to a slackness which betrays unwillingness or some personal end. But if the Lord seems to be slow in fulfilling His promise, that is not to be explained, Peter means, as men are tempted to explain such slowness on the part of their fellow-men, as due to forgetfulness, lack of interest, procrastination, or anything personal to Himself only. Its explanation lies in something which touches our interest, and illustrates His grace.—**not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.** This is added to show what is meant by this long-suffering. This sentence has been dragged too generally into the controversy about the Augustinian view of predestination, and the Calvinistic doctrine of the limited extent, or rather the definite design, of the Atonement. On the one hand, theologians like Beza have interpreted it of the elect only. On the other hand, exegetes like Huther regard it as adverse to the Calvinistic theory. The passage, however, has little bearing on the question, the subject dealt with being not the elective purpose but the long-suffering of God, and the 'willing' referred to being not 'will' in the sense of the Divine decree or determining volition, but 'will' in the wider sense of disposition, desire, or, as the R. V. puts it, 'wishing.' For the thought itself compare Paul's parallel declaration in 1 Tim. ii. 4, and, above all, the Old Testament statements which Peter may perhaps have had in view (Ezek. xviii. 23, xxxiii. 11). For the phrase 'come to,' compare Matt. xv. 17, where it has the literal sense and is rendered 'enter into.' In the Greek Tragedians it occurs often in the sense of *moving on to, advancing to*.

Ver. 10. **But the day of the Lord**; the day which in ver. 12 is called 'the day of God,' and elsewhere 'the day of Christ' (2 Thess. ii. 2), 'the day of the Lord Jesus' (2 Cor. i. 14). The expression carries us back to the Old Testament prophecies of *Jehovah's day*, or *the day of the Lord* (Joel i. 15; Isa. ii. 12; Ezek. xiii. 5), and *the day of His Coming* (Mal. iii. 2). There it designates Messiah's Coming, or Jehovah's own Coming in connection with the realization of Messianic hope, and that as an event of judicial as well as gracious consequence. In such passages as the present it is transferred to the day of the Second Advent, and to that specially as a day of judicial sifting and decision. This clause affirms the *certainty* of the approach of that time, notwithstanding the facts just noticed, and the order of the words gives great emphasis to the statement. Though some deem it so late of appearing (the writer means), that it may never appear, and though it is true that God in His long-suffering delays the event, 'yet **come will** (or, 'on you shall be') the day of the Lord.' The *suddenness* with which it will enter is next asserted.—**as a thief**: the best authorities omit the words 'in the night' which are added in the A. V. Peter had been taught the figure by Christ Himself (Matt. xxiv. 43; Luke xii. 39). It appears also in Paul (2 Thess. v. 2) and in the Apocalypse (chaps. iii. 3, xvi. 15). It does not properly convey the idea of *dread*, but simply that of the *swift* and *unexpected*.—**in which the heavens with a rushing noise shall pass away.** The phrase 'with a great noise,' which is given by both the A. V. and the R. V., is a prosaic rendering, which entirely fails to do justice to the singular vividness and force of the original. Peter uses an adverb which is not found elsewhere in the New Testament, and which, indeed, is of rare occurrence even in the Classics. It means 'with a *rushing* sound' (or, 'motion'). The idea expressed by its cognates is that of the *whizzing* or *hurtling* of arrows, the *whistling* of the descending scourge, the *whirring* wing and *rushing* movement of the bird in flight. It is a term to stimulate the imagination, conveying by a single stroke a conception which it takes many words to reproduce in English, of the dread facility with which the change shall be effected, its unerring suddenness and rapidity, the crash of its instantaneous completion. The renderings of some of the older English Versions deserve notice. Wycliffe, *e.g.*, gives 'with great birr;' Tyndale, 'with terrible noise;' Cranmer, 'in manner of a tempest;' the Rhemish, 'with great violence.' As to the 'pass away' (the same verb had been used by Christ in His prophecy of the end, Matt. xxiv. 35), compare such passages as Rev. xxi. 11; Isa. xxxiv. 4; Ps. cii. 27.—**the elements, moreover, shall be dissolved, consumed by intense heat.** The connecting word here is not the usual 'and,' but a conjunction which implies contrast or distinction as well as connection. It should therefore be rendered 'but,' or 'moreover.' The 'melt' of the A. V. should rather be, as in ver. 11 (where the same verb is employed), 'be dissolved' (or 'loosed'). The phrase 'with fervent heat,' which is given by the A. V. and retained by the R. V., represents a participle which means 'burning fiercely,' or 'consumed with fierce heat.' The question of difficulty here, however, is what we are to understand by these 'elements.' Some (*e.g.* Bengel, Alford, Plumptre, etc.) suppose that the *heavenly bodies* are meant, these being, as it were, the elements making up the heavens. This view is held to be supported by such considerations as these: the fact that the sun, moon, and stars are introduced into other biblical descriptions of the day of the Lord (Isa. xiii. 9, 10, xxiv. 23, xxxiv. 4, etc.), and especially in Christ's own announcement of it (Matt. xxiv. 29); the relation in which this clause stands to the preceding statement about the heavens themselves; the employment of the term by early Christian writers (*e.g.* Justin Martyr, *Apol.* ii. 5, *Trypho*, xxiii.) in this sense; and the apparent distinction drawn here between these elements and both the heavens and the earth. Others (Bede, etc.) take the four elements of the physical universe, earth, air, water, fire, to be in view. In this case there is the awkwardness of representing the writer as speaking of the dissolution of fire by fire; hence it is proposed to

limit the expression to three of these elements, or even to air and water alone (Estius). All these views, however, as well as other modifications of them (such *e.g.* as the idea that the *stars* in particular are meant), attribute to Peter a more sharply-defined meaning than was probably intended. The great objection to the first view is that the term does not appear to denote the heavenly bodies in any other passage of Scripture. In Classical Greek it seems to mean primarily the several parts of a series, the components which make up something; whence it came to be used of the simple series of sounds which form the elements of language, the first principles or elementary *data* of science, such as the points, lines, etc. of geometry, and, in Physics, the component parts of matter, which were reduced to four in the philosophical schools. In the New Testament it occurs only seven times, viz. in the present verse and again in ver. 12, in Gal. iv. 3 and 9, in Col. ii. 8 and 20, and Heb. v. 12. In the Petrine passages it clearly has a physical sense; in the others an ethical. Here it is applied, with no reference to scientific or philosophical ideas, but in a broad and popular sense, to the parts of which the heavens in particular, or the system of things generally, are made up. It may denote, therefore, much the same as is covered by the phrase 'the powers of the heavens' in Matt. xxiv. 29 (so Huther), the idea being that these heavens shall pass away by having their constituent parts dissolved. Or it may refer in the wider sense to the whole framework of the world, as that world was conceived to consist of heavens and earth (so Wordsworth, etc.).—**and the earth**; so it should be rendered, and not 'the earth also.'—**and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.** The 'works' are not to be limited either to the results of man's moral activity (as in 1 Cor. iii. 13, 15), or to his achievements in general. The phrase is better understood, as is done by most interpreters, in the wider sense given it by Bengel—'works of nature and of art.' As Peter's language, however, seems at so many points here to be steeped in the terms of the ancient prophecies, it is still more likely that this is simply his equivalent for the Old Testament phrase 'the earth and the fulness thereof.' In that case it would point to God's works rather than to man's—'to the creations of God which belong to the earth, as they are related in the history of creation, cf. Rev. x. 6' (Huther).

Instead of 'burnt up,' some of the very best documentary authorities, including the two most ancient manuscripts, give another reading, which means 'shall be found.' It is supposed, however, that this reading is one of those in which the earliest documents themselves have gone astray, and that, as the reading followed by the Received Text is supported by far inferior authorities, this is one of a few passages in which the original text has not been preserved in any of our existing authorities. The reading of the oldest manuscripts is supposed by the latest critical editors to have arisen from a corruption of another, which would mean 'shall flow (or, melt) away' (see Westcott and Hort, vol. ii. p. 103). Those who retain the reading which the ordinary laws of evidence would lead us to adopt, get a satisfactory sense out of it by interpreting it 'shall be discovered,' that is, found out judicially, or made to appear as they are. This would fit in very well with the idea of the next verse, which is that of the manner of life which the thought of the judicial end should recommend. Some propose to hold by the ordinary sense of the verb, and to turn the sentence into an interrogation—'Shall the earth and the works that are therein be found (*i.e.* shall they continue) then?' There is no uncertainty as to the sense which is meant to be conveyed. The uncertainty attaches only to the particular expression which was given to that sense. But this forms, in view of the singular results which are shown by the documents, one of the most perplexing problems in the criticism and history of the text. One of the primary manuscripts has another reading, which means 'shall disappear.' A later Syriac Version inserts the negative, and gives 'shall not be found.' The wide variety of reading is a witness to the early uncertainty of the text here, and to the difficulty felt with the term which was transmitted by the oldest documents. It is well to know, on the testimony of those who have devoted their lives to such questions as these, that the passages affected by anything amounting to substantial variation 'can hardly form more than one-thousandth part of the entire text,' and that 'the books of the New Testament as preserved in extant documents assuredly speak to us in every important respect in language identical with that in which they spoke to those for whom they were originally written' (Westcott and Hort's *New Testament in Greek*, ii. pp. 2, 284).

CHAPTER III. 11–18.

Practical Appeals in view of the certain Advent of the Day of the Lord.

11 SEEING then[1] *that* all these things[2] shall be [a]dissolved,[3] what [b]manner *of persons* ought ye to [c]be in *all* holy
12 [d]conversation and [e]godliness;[4] [f]looking for and [g]hasting

[a] See refs. at ver. 10.
[b] Mat. viii. 27; Mk. xiii. 1; Lu. i. 29, vii. 39;
1 Jo. iii. 1. [c] See refs. at ch. i. 8. [d] See refs. at 1 Pet. i. 15. [e] See refs at ch. i. 3. [f] Vers. 13, 14; Mat. xi 3, xxiv. 50; Lu. i. 21, vii. 19, 20, xii. 46; Acts iii. 5, etc. [g] Lu. ii. 16, xix. 5, 6; Acts xx. 16.

[1] *omit* then [2] *insert* thus [3] *literally*, are being dissolved
[4] *literally*, in holy modes of life and pieties

unto [5] the [k] coming of the day of God, wherein [6] the heavens, being [l] on fire, shall be [m] dissolved, and the [l] elements shall
13 [n] melt with [n] fervent heat? [7] Nevertheless we, according to his [o] promise, [p] look for [8] a [q] new heaven and a new earth, wherein
14 [r] dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye [s] look for such [9] things, be [t] diligent that ye may be [u] found of
15 him [v] in peace, [w] without spot, and blameless: [10] and [x] account *that* the [y] long-suffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our [z] beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom [a] given
16 unto him, hath written [11] unto you; as also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are [b] unlearned and [c] unstable [d] wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto
17 their own [e] destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye [f] know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being [g] led away by the [h] error of the [i] wicked, [k] fall [12] from your own
18 [l] stedfastness: but [m] grow in [n] grace, and *in* the [o] knowledge [13] of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* [p] glory both now and for ever. Amen.

[k] 2 Cor. vii. 6; Phil. i. 26, ii. 12; Jas. v. 7, 8.
[l] 1 Cor. vii. 9; 2 Cor. xi. 29; Eph. vi. 16; Rev. i. 15, iii. 18.
[m] See refs. at ver. 10.
[n] See refs. at ver. 10
[o] Isa. xxxiv. 4, lxiv. 1, 2.
[p] See refs. at ver. 10.
[q] See refs. at ch. i. 10.
[r] See refs. at ver. 12.
[s] Isa. lxv. 17, lxvi. 22; Rev. xxi. 1.
[t] Isa. xxxii. 16; Eph. iii. 17.
[u] See refs. at ver. 12.
[v] See refs. at ch. i. 10.
[w] 2 Cor. v. 3; Phil. iii. 9.
[x] Acts xvi. 36; Jas. ii. 16.
[y] 1 Tim. vi. 14; Jas. i. 27; 1 Pet. i. 19; Job xv. 15.

[r] See refs. at ver. 9. [s] See refs. at 1 Pet. ii. 20. [t] Eph. vi. 21; Col. iv. 7, 9; also 1 Cor. xv. 58; Jas. i. 16, 19, ii. 5. [u] Rom. xii. 3, 6, xv. 15, etc. [b] Ps. xlviii. 11. [c] Ch. ii. 14. [d] 2 Kin. xxii. 27.
[e] See refs. at ver. 7. [f] Acts xxvi. 5; Rom. viii. 29, xi. 2; 1 Pet. i. 20. [g] Rom. xii. 16; Gal ii. 13; Ex. xiv. 6.
[h] See refs. at ch. ii. 18. [i] See refs. at ch. ii. 7. [k] Gal. v. 4. [l] Isa. iii. 1. [m] Mat. vi. 28; Eph. iv. 15, etc.
[n] 1 Pet. v. 10; Jude 4. [o] Phil. iii. 8. [p] Rom. xv. 36; Eph. iii. 21; Rev. i. 6.

[5] hastening, *or perhaps, with R. V.*, earnestly desiring [6] by reason of which
[7] *literally*, and the elements burning with intense heat are melted
[8] *or, with R. V.*, but, according to his promise, we look for [9] these
[10] *rather*, found in peace, spotless and blameless in his sight
[11] *rather*, wrote
[12] beware lest, carried away with the error of the lawless, ye fall
[13] in the grace and knowledge

The closing verses are devoted to the pressing of certain practical injunctions, which are closely connected with the Christian view of the end. These are given in a strain as tender as it is solemn and pointed. They are based in part upon the consideration of the catastrophe which comes in the train of the Lord's Advent. As they are appeals directed to believers, however, they are based to a larger extent upon the brighter aspect which that Coming of the Lord presents to the Christian, and particularly upon the new and holier system of things which shall then take the place of the present. The counsels deal with the posture of earnest and expectant waiting as that which best befits the Christian, with the propriety of labouring so as to prepare the way for the Lord's Coming, with the duties of watchfulness against seductive error, constancy in the Christian faith, and progress in the Christian graces. The explanation which has been already offered of the Lord's apparent delay is repeated, and what Peter says on the subject of the Divine long-suffering is sustained by affectionate reference to the teaching of Paul.

Ver. 11. **Seeing that these things are thus all dissolving.** The rendering which is sustained by the best authorities differs from the Received Text in omitting the 'these' of the A. V. and inserting 'thus.' The verb is given in the present tense,—not 'shall be dissolved' as the A. V. puts it, or even 'are to be dissolved' as the R. V. renders it, but 'are dissolving,' or, 'are being dissolved.' The certainty of the end is made doubly vivid by the process of dissolution being represented as having already set in and as now working towards its final revelation. — **what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conduct and godliness.** The 'be' is expressed, as in chap. i. 8 and chap. ii. 19, by the verb which conveys the idea of subsistence rather than mere existence. Here it points to established character, or permanent possession of qualities. The qualities themselves are denoted by plural nouns meaning literally 'holy modes of living' and 'godlinesses,' in reference to all the various forms in which the holy walk and godliness exhibit themselves. They are therefore very well rendered by the A. V. '*all* holy conversation and godliness.' Some take this verse to put a question, and the next verse to give the reply. It is more consistent, however, with N. T. usage (which deals with the word rendered 'what manner of persons' as an exclamation; cf. especially Mark xiii. 1; Luke i. 29; 1 John iii. 1), to

take the two verses as forming together a single solemn exclamation. To give still sharper point to the expression, some of the best interpreters connect the clause 'in all holy living,' etc., not with what precedes, but with what follows it, making the whole run thus: 'What manner of persons ought ye to be, looking, in all holy living and godliness, for . . . the day of God!'

Ver. 12. **looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.** This is the only instance of the 'day' being designated 'the day of *God*.' The 'looking for' is expressed by the term which is rendered 'wait for' in Luke i. 21, viii. 40, Acts x. 24, 'expect' in Acts iii. 5, 'be in expectation' in Luke iii. 15, etc. Following the Vulgate and the older English Versions, the A. V. gives 'hasting *unto*.' This is certainly wrong. The question is, which of two interpretations is to be substituted, whether the simple 'hastening' (or 'hasting,' as the A. V. puts it in the margin), or 'earnestly desiring' (as the R. V. gives it in the text). The Classics may be said to present instances of both meanings. But it is rather the idea of '*busying oneself* earnestly about a thing' than that of merely 'expecting' it that the Classical usage illustrates, and that sense suits objects which are present rather than things which are yet prospective. The other meaning, 'hastening,' or 'urging on,' is well sustained, and has the special advantage of agreeing in a remarkable way with the appeal made by Peter (which otherwise is of an entirely exceptional kind) in his discourse in Solomon's Porch—'Repent ye, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, *that so* there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and *that* He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, *even* Jesus; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things,' etc. (Acts iii. 19–21). The idea, therefore, is that of *accelerating* the advent of that decisive day through our holy lives and our labours for the advancement of the Gospel, causing that day to 'come the more quickly,' as Archbishop Trench explains it (*On the A. V.*, p. 131), 'by helping to fulfil those conditions without which it cannot come—that day being no day inexorably fixed, but one the arrival of which it is free to the Church to help and hasten on by faith and by prayer, and through a more rapid accomplishing of the number of the elect.' That this idea, though seldom expressed in the N. T., was not unfamiliar to Jews, is proved by the occurrence of such rabbinical sayings as this: 'If thou keepest this precept, thou hastenest the day of Messiah.' But it is enshrined, indeed, in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer—Thy kingdom come.—**by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements burning with intense heat are melted.** The 'wherein' of the A. V. is entirely wrong. The 'which' may refer either to the 'Coming' or to the 'day;' and the meaning is that this event of the 'Coming,' or this 'day of God,' will *occasion* the change or catastrophe which is reaffirmed here. The one thing will inevitably cause the other. The idea is something like that in Rev. xx. 11. The tense changes from the future, 'shall be dissolved,' into the present, 'are melted;' the effect of which is to give yet greater force to the assertion of the certainty of this destiny. This last verb is one which denotes *melting* in the most literal sense—the melting, *e.g.*, of snow, of metals, of salt in water, etc. Some stumble at the application of this to the elements. Others point to the fact that the record of the rocks bears witness to a process of liquefaction by fire to which the material of the existing earth has been subjected, and ask why the present system may not undergo a like process of fiery renovation at the great day. The use to be made of the passage, however, must be a very guarded one, so far as theorizings about the nature of the end are concerned. Peter is speaking in terms of the lofty prophetic imagery of the O. T. Compare such passages as Mic. i. 4, Mal. iv. 1, and above all, Isa xxxiv. 4. Classical literature has anticipations of a similar kind. Cicero, *e.g.*, says that 'it will happen, nevertheless, one day that all this world shall be burnt up with fire' (*Acad. Quæst.* iii. 37).

Ver. 13. **But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth.** The rendering of the R. V. is decidedly superior here to that of the A. V. The latter throws an emphasis upon the 'we,' where the original throws it upon the 'new.' The 'look for' is expressed by the same term as in ver. 12. The 'promise' referred to (the word is the same as in chap. i. 4) is the promise of God in the O. T. The passages particularly in the writer's mind may be those in Isaiah (xxx. 26, lxv. 17, lxvi. 22). The same hope, couched in the form of vision, meets us in John (Rev. xxi. 1). The *newness* of the future heavens and earth is expressed by a term which denotes what is *fresh* as contrasted with what is *exhausted*, and deals with the *condition* rather than with the *age* of an object.—**wherein dwelleth righteousness.** The 'righteousness' is to be understood in the broad, ethical sense of conformity with the Divine will; and this is to 'dwell' (cf. Eph. iii. 17), to have its home there, and not to be as on earth 'a wanderer and changeful guest' (Mason). Compare again the prophetic visions in Isa. lxv. 17–25, Rev. xxi. 3–27, and also the Pauline doctrine of the participation of nature in the restoration of man as well as in his fall (Rom. viii. 20–22).

Ver. 14. **Wherefore, beloved, looking for these things, give diligence to be found in peace, spotless and unblameable in his sight.** The 'looking for' (again the same term as in vers. 12 and 13) may give the reason for the duty which is enjoined, as it is understood by both the A. V. and the R. V.—'seeing that ye look,' etc.; or (less probably), it may form a part of the duty, 'look for these things and give diligence' (Huther, etc.). As to the 'give diligence' see on chap. i. 10. The 'spotless' is expressed by the adjective which is applied to Christ as the Lamb in 1 Pet. i. 19, and the 'unblameable' by another form (which occurs also in Phil. ii. 15, where it is rendered 'without rebuke') of the adjective translated 'without blemish' in the same passage. Here the epithets represent the qualities which should distinguish the faithful as directly opposed to those which mark the false teachers, who have been described as 'spots and blemishes' (chap. ii. 13). It is supposed by some (*e.g.* Alford) that the 'parable of the wedding garment was floating before the Apostle's mind,' especially as the statement in chap. ii. 13 refers to the *feasts* of the early Christians. Some good expositors (*e.g.* Huther) suppose that the writer deals here with what the readers were to be during their lifetime of expec-

tation. But the use of the phrase 'found' (cf. 1 Pet. i. 7) points clearly to the time of Christ's judicial return. They were to labour so to live that, when He appeared, they might be *discovered* or *adjudged* (such is the sense of the 'found') spotless and unblameable 'in His sight,' or 'according to His judgment' (so we should render what is incorrectly given as 'found *of Him*' in the A. V.); and this discovery or adjudgment should be 'in peace.' Where spotlessness and unblameableness form the verdict, the Lord's controversy with His people will cease and the voice of judgment will be the voice of peace.

Ver. 15. **And account the long-suffering of our Lord salvation.** If *Christ* is referred to here, the passage becomes one of great importance in relation to the doctrine of His Person, as it speaks of Him in the same terms as have been already applied to God, and indirectly claims for Him Divine prerogatives. And this is made on the whole the more probable reference both by general N. T. use, and by the phrase, 'our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' which comes in subsequently in the same paragraph (ver. 18). On the other hand, it is argued that the application of the title 'Lord,' in vers. 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, rules its application here, and points to *God* in the large O. T. sense as the subject. The Divine delay is to be interpreted not as 'slackness' (ver. 9) or procrastination, but as long-suffering, and the long-suffering is to be interpreted and valued as 'salvation,' —as the suspension of judgment with a view to a prolonged offer of grace. See also Rom. ii. 4.—**even as also our beloved brother Paul.** In confirmation of what he himself writes, Peter refers to what had already been addressed to these Gentile Christians by the great Apostle of the Uncircumcision. On the difficulties raised by the disappointment of the expectation that Christ would speedily return, on the dangers likely to arise in the Church, on the attitude to be maintained in the prospect of the end, Peter was giving only the same explanations and counsels as had been given by Paul. The phrase 'beloved brother' is understood by many (Huther, etc.) as an official term rather than a personal, indicating the *ministerial* intimacy that subsisted between the two. It is doubtful, however, whether it is meant to describe Paul specially as a valued associate of Peter's in the Apostleship, or even as a fellow-worker. The 'our' links Peter with his readers, and gives the title 'beloved brother' rather the force of a term of personal affection. Jewish Christians like Peter and Gentile Christians like his readers had this, among other things, in common now—that they regarded Paul as a dear and trusted friend. Paul himself gives the title 'beloved brother' twice to Tychicus (Eph. vi. 21; Col. iv. 7). The man who now speaks thus fondly of Paul is he who at an earlier period was 'withstood to the face' by Paul 'because he was to be blamed' (Gal. ii. 11).—**according to the wisdom given unto him.** Paul's counsel was more than his own personal opinion. As the expression of a 'wisdom' which he received (cf. 1 Cor. iii. 10; Gal. ii. 9; Eph. ii. 2, 7, 8; Col. i. 25, etc.), it is the weightier confirmation of Peter's teaching.—**wrote unto you.** To what Pauline writing or writings may Peter be supposed to refer? The question has been keenly debated and very variously answered. It turns upon two prior questions, those, namely, touching the subjects immediately in view and the persons immediately addressed. Those who think that the verse deals only with the subject last mentioned, namely the 'long-suffering of our Lord,' naturally look for statements made by Paul on that particular theme, and identify the writing with the Epistle to the Romans which, in such passages as ii. 4, ix. 22, takes that strain. Those who regard this Second Epistle as directed not so much to Asiatic Christians as to Christians generally, conclude that the writing intended may be such an Epistle as that to the Hebrews, especially in view of the declarations in chaps. ix. 26, etc., x. 25, 37. Others fix on First Corinthians, in which so much is said on the subject of wisdom (chap. i. 7–9, etc.). Others, who take the mysterious subject of the Second Advent as the special difficulty on which Peter appeals to Paul, are of opinion that the Epistles to the Thessalonians are meant, both because their early date affords time for their general circulation even among remote Christians, and because they are so much engaged (*e.g.* in 1 Thess. iv. 13–18, v. 2, and the Second Epistle throughout) with the Lord's Coming. There is little reason, however, to suppose that Peter alludes only to the one subject of the Divine long-suffering, as that is specified in the same verse. That is itself but a part of the general exhortation in vers. 14, 15. It is most reasonable, therefore, to regard him as referring, in this remarkable tribute to Paul, to the general subject which he has been engaged with—the end of the present system of things, the Lord's Coming, the duties to be inferred from the prospect, and the seductive errors of the false teachers. The 'wrote *unto you*' seems also clearly to identify the writing or writings with communications made to the same circle of readers as Peter himself addresses, and these readers, as the Epistle itself indicates (chap. iii. 1), are substantially those to whom the former Epistle was directed. Among the Pauline Epistles we have several addressed to this Asiatic circle, Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians, not to speak of the Epistle to the Laodiceans (Col. iv. 16). And of these, if we are entitled to identify the writing with any of the extant Epistles, those to the Colossians and Ephesians best fulfil the conditions. In the former (*e.g.* chap. i. 22, ii. 8) we find exhortations on the subject of the Christian life like those given here by Peter, and warnings like his against false teachers and a pretentious type of knowledge. In favour of the latter we have also the considerations, that it was probably a kind of circular letter, and that there are many points of affinity between it and the Petrine Epistles (specially the First).

Ver. 16. **as also in all** (his) **epistles, speaking in them of these things**; a statement from which we are not entitled to infer that the Pauline Epistles already formed a collection which could be spoken of as one whole.—**in which are some things hard to be understood.** The 'in which' refers, according to the best reading, not to the 'things' of which Paul spake, but to the Epistles themselves. The adjective 'hard to be understood' occurs only here. Some suppose the reference to be particularly to Paul's doctrine of the Second Coming, as given in such passages of his Epistles as 1 Cor. xv. 12–58, 1 Thess. iv. 13, etc.; others to his doctrines of justification and Christian freedom, which engaged so much of

his teaching, and were peculiarly open to perversion. It is also suggested that the more mystical sections of his doctrine, those found, *e.g.*, in Eph. ii. 5, etc., Col. ii. 12, may be specially in view, as these were capable of being turned to the advantage both of the party of immoral licence, and of errorists like Hymenæus and Philetus, who taught that the resurrection was past already (Hofmann).—**which the ignorant and unstable wrest.** These three words 'ignorant,' 'unstable,' 'wrest,' are peculiar to this passage. The first, which is rendered 'unlearned' by the A. V. and 'ignorant' by the R. V., has not quite the same sense as the 'unlearned' applied to Peter and John in Acts iv. 13. Here it means *unskilled*, or *uninformed* in Christian truth. With the second compare chap. ii. 14. The third means primarily to *twist*, *e.g.* with a windlass, or with a screw, or upon an instrument of torture like the rack, or to *wrench*, as *e.g.* in the case of a dislocated limb. Thence it comes to mean to twist or distort the sense of words.—**as they do the other scriptures.** Those who wrest particular statements in one section of the Scriptures are next represented as apt to make the same perverted use of Scripture generally. In the N. T. the phrase 'the Scriptures' is regularly applied to the O. T. writings. The singular may be used of a particular *passage* or *portion* of Scripture, as in John xix. 37; and is once employed where the words in question cannot be identified with any in the Bible as we have it (Jas. iv. 5). But in some fifty occurrences the plural seems never to be used but of the O. T. This is a strong reason for supposing that the O. T. Scriptures are also meant here, and that Paul's Epistles, therefore, are already ranked along with them. On the other hand, it is urged that Peter would scarcely have placed the O. T. in this unqualified manner in the same category with the Epistles of a contemporary of his own, and that it is probably other writings of the New Testament period that are referred to. Even thus it appears that there were already so many writings which were recognised as Christian Scriptures, and spoken of in terms similar to those applied to the ancient and venerated collection of the O. T. Scriptures, and that the Epistles of Paul were reckoned among these. The implicit testimony contained in this statement to the *authority* of certain writings as Scripture also deserves to be noticed. It is observed that, as Peter closes his Epistles with this testimony, so Malachi brings the O. T. to its end with a charge to 'remember the *law of Moses with the statutes and judgments*;' John concludes the four Gospels with a similar testimony (John xx. 31); Paul closes his Epistles with a solemn statement on the profitableness of inspired Scripture (2 Tim. iii. 14–17); Jude closes the Catholic Epistles with an injunction to remember *the words spoken before* by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 17); while the Apocalypse ends with the promise of blessing to those who keep, and of the opposite to those who take from or add to, the sayings of the book (Wordsworth).—**to their own destruction.** The words carry us back to the 'heresies of destruction' mentioned in chap. ii. 1, the emphatic 'own,' however, intimating that in this case the destruction comes upon the men not by the seductions of others, but by their own misuse of Scripture. The passage has been seized on in support of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the obscurity of Scripture, its possible injuriousness to the private student, and the danger of leaving it in the hands of the people without an authoritative interpretation. What Peter is warning against, however, is the perils of a misuse of Scripture. What he states is not that Scripture is unsafe in the hands of the people, but that there are certain things in it which are capable of being perverted by a particular class. And while he gives this caution to the 'ignorant and unstable,' he speaks of Paul as writing 'according to the *wisdom* given unto him,' and earnestly enjoins upon all these Gentile Christians scattered throughout the Asiatic Churches 'to be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour' (chap. iii. 2).

Ver. 17. **Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things before, beware lest, carried away with the error of the lawless, ye fall from your own stedfastness.** The epithet 'lawless' (not merely 'wicked,' as both the A. V. and R. V. put it) is that which was formerly applied to the men of Sodom in chap. ii. 7. It points, therefore, to the licentious character of the errorists. The phrase 'carried away with' is an extremely forcible one. It is the phrase which Paul applies to the action of Barnabas when he dissembled with Peter himself at Antioch (Gal. ii. 13). It may suggest the picture of the 'error' as a powerful current sweeping what it can into its bosom, and snatching the unwary off with it from the rock of their stedfastness. In Rom. xii. 16, which is its only other occurrence, it has a different sense. This particular term 'stedfastness' occurs only here, but belongs to the same class with the previous 'unstable' (ver. 16), and the adjective used in 1 Pet. v. 10; 2 Pet. i. 12. With 'fall from' compare Gal. v. 4.

Ver. 18. **But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.** The R. V. prefers the rendering 'grow in the grace and knowledge,' etc.—a rendering which may mean either 'in the grace and in the knowledge which Christ gives,' or 'in the grace which Christ gives and in the gift of knowing Him.' The A. V. keeps clear of this ambiguity, as well as of the special awkwardness of the second construction, by taking the grace as a thing distinct from what follows it. The great duty finally urged is thus the duty of progress, and that in two particular articles, namely, the gracious life or the Christian graces generally, and that special grace of a personal knowledge of Christ which holds so fundamental a place in the Epistle. In this way, too, the writer returns at the close of his letter to the thought with which he started. His opening salutation had been a prayer that 'grace and peace' might be 'multiplied' to them 'in the knowlege of God and of Jesus our Lord' (chap. i. 2). And now, 'as the conclusion of the whole matter, and as the only effectual preservation from the assaults and seductions of all forms of a science falsely so called, this same blessing of spiritual enlargement, and that through the same means, is laid on their own consciences and hearts as a most solemn obligation' (Lillie).—**to him be** (or, *is*) **the glory both now and for ever.** The final **Amen**, which is retained by the R. V., is of very doubtful authority. The idea of *eternity* is expressed here by an altogether singular phrase, which means literally 'unto the

day of the æon,' and which may be chosen to denote the *beginning* of the new, the eternal age,—'the day on which eternity, as contrasted with time, begins' (Huther). The doxology is addressed to Christ, and is significant of Peter's conception of His Person. It is, as Alford suggests, like one of those hymns which Pliny says were sung by the Christians of his time to Christ as God. It closes the Epistle, too, in its own simple majesty, unaccompanied and undiminished by any statement personal to the writer, or even by any of the usual valedictory salutations to the readers.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

THE First Epistle of St. John may be said generally to belong to that sphere of revelation in which we have 'pressed on unto perfection' (Heb. vi. 1). It takes us into the 'most holy place' of the Divine mysteries; and, as has been before observed, the reader must seek admission with the words in his ears: 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' We find ourselves, indeed, in the same inmost sanctuary into which St. John's Gospel has led us; but, while in the Gospel we see the highest glory of the High Priest who came from heaven and re-entered it for us, in the Epistle we are taught what the Christian life is upon earth that most fully represents and honours the Saviour's work in heaven, and makes us partakers of His glory. Its matter is the highest and deepest mystery of Christian doctrine reduced to practice; its tone is that of the assured and tranquil confidence of Christian experience; its style is that of childlike simplicity, combined with the most matured contemplative grandeur. St. John here leaves us his final legacy; and his final legacy—confirming all that has gone before—supplements and consummates the entire revelation of God, and may be said to be the final voice of the inspiring Spirit. It may be expected, therefore, that he who would understand it must connect its teaching with all that has gone before, must carefully collate it with the Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament, and above all must yield himself up to the supreme guidance of the Spirit whose unction 'teaching all things' is so specially honoured in the heart of the Epistle.

The questions which meet us at the outset, and belong to the Introduction, are few and simple. We have to consider the testimony, external and internal, to its apostolic authorship; its relation to the other writings of St. John; the readers for whom it was designed; its pre-eminence in the doctrine of the New Testament generally, as its close and consummation; the integrity of the text; and, finally, the order of thought traceable in it. These topics will be briefly considered: briefly, because many of them have been more fully discussed in the Introductions to the other Johannine writings, and, moreover, because the exposition itself will render much diffuse preliminary matter needless.

I. The Epistle, like the Gospel, does not bear the name of its author. But the early Church, with all but perfect unanimity, ascribed both to the Apostle John. The evidence of this, in relation to the Epistle with which we now have to do, is without a flaw, since the few slight exceptions that may be found do, when fairly looked at, really support the argument. Every generation in the first three centuries, and almost every decade, furnishes some distinct evidence of the common sentiment. Polycarp, one of the sub-apostolic Fathers, and a disciple of St. John, quotes the very words of 1 John iv. 2, 3. We have the testimony of Eusebius that Papias, in

the first half of the second century, expressly quoted it. Justin Martyr, or the anonymous author of the Epistle to Diognetus, again and again refers to it. So do Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Irenæus; some of these giving the words of the Epistle—and those among its most distinctive words—mentioning, too, the author by name. A list of New Testament writings, drawn up towards the close of the second century, and known as the Muratorian Canon, cites the first words as St. John's, speaks of his using his own Gospel, and refers to the two smaller Epistles as St. John's, and as 'general' or 'catholic.' About the same time the Peshito, or old Syriac Version, bears the same testimony. Eusebius placed our Epistle among the Homologoumena, or 'writings universally accepted.' Subsequent witnesses continue the uninterrupted tradition; and, in fact, East and West, Europe and Asia and Africa, agree for many ages in ascribing the three Epistles, or at least the First, to the Evangelist and Apostle St. John. It has been remarked already that the exceptions only strengthen the chain of evidence. The Alogi, who, as enemies of the Logos doctrine, were said by Epiphanius to have rejected the Gospel and the Revelation, rejected the Epistle also. Marcion did not include it in his list; for some few expressions in it were deemed contradictory to his views of the Old Testament. On the whole, therefore, it may be said that no document of the New Testament is better attested in antiquity. Jerome sums up its general consent: 'Ab universis ecclesiasticis viris probatur' (*De vir. ill.* c. 9). Modern criticism has had nothing to plead against this catena, but has founded its objections on internal evidence alone. This leads us to our next section.

II. The relation of the Epistle to the other writings of St. John, or to the Johannine literature generally, is a very interesting one. Omitting at present the Apocalypse, it needs only a casual glance to show that there is a certain style, whether literary or theological, common to the Epistles and the Gospel: a style that is so marked and characteristic as to separate these writings from all others in the New Testament. This absolute unity of conception pervades both the documents, and moulds them throughout. It extends from the highest objects of thought, God and Christ, life and death, down to the slightest peculiarities of phrase and construction. The similarity, or rather the identity, is so obvious that we may dispense with the lists of doctrinal and verbal coincidence usually given, and leave the reader to mark them for himself, especially as we shall have to dwell on some of these leading ideas for another purpose. Now in ancient times, as we have seen, there was never any doubt that St. John wrote both. But the exigencies of hypothesis in modern times have required the abandonment of this notion, which is regarded by a certain class as unworthy of scientific criticism. The Apostle St. John is supposed by many to have himself written nothing, but only to have furnished an honourable name on which to hang the results of pious fraud. Others think that the Apostle wrote the Gospel, but that the Epistles were written by a certain 'John the Presbyter,' whom tradition, according to Eusebius, mentions as having lived at Ephesus at the same time with the apostle. There are some, again, who think that the First Epistle is simply a spurious document, feebly imitating the Gospel, and using the name of 'the presbyter' even as the Gospel tacitly assumed the name of the apostle.

A close examination of these writings will further show that they were written, by the same author indeed, but on very different occasions and for very different purposes. It has become almost habitual to regard the Epistle as a companion document or appendage to the Gospel: a view for which there is no justification. There is not a single sentence which, fairly interpreted, points that way. On the contrary, there is much which indicates another class of readers, a new order of

circumstances, and a considerably later date. The Epistle speaks in the style of a more advanced development concerning the 'manifestation' or 'coming' of Christ as the 'day of judgment' and 'the last time.' It is another class of readers which rendered appropriate the reference to the 'many antichrists;' and, generally, the Gnostic errors obviously combated throughout the Epistle are more distinctly viewed, if not actually much nearer, than they appear in the Gospel. There is no hint in the latter that Docetism, or the heresy that made the Son of God a phantom combination of human nature with an emanation descending upon the man Jesus for a season, was directly combated. The Gospel rises sublimely above all transient heresy. But this particular error is directly confronted in the Epistle: more directly than any other error which the New Testament mentions. All this points to a later date, but by no means to a different author. There is not a word about the incarnation, the material judgment or coming of Christ, the antichrist, the person of Satan, or any other leading doctrine in the Epistle, the germ of which is not found somewhere in the Gospel. Contrariety between them there is absolutely none. But different and new aspects of the Logos, the Comforter, the propitiation, the nature and penalty of sin, there doubtless are. The Logos or Word is the Word of life; and surely this is not a lower conception of the Son of God, nor one that essentially diverges from that of the Fourth Gospel. The Paraclete is certainly in the Epistle Jesus Himself; but there is no opposition between this and the Gospel doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete: the heavenly Paraclete of the Epistle and the internal Paraclete of the Gospel answer to each other, as they do in Romans viii. The same may be said of the alleged absence of the Spirit's personality in the doctrine of the Epistle as compared with that of the Gospel. In both He is the Spirit of Christ: in both, 'the anointing from the Holy One;' and in both, the agent and element of regenerate life. The later document—as we believe it to have been—introduces two new terms, Sperma and Chrisma, which certainly no one can prove that St. John might not have used, especially if we regard him as vindicating those terms from Gnostic perversion. And it is not an unfair argument to plead that whatever is said of the Holy Ghost is said to those who are supposed to have the Lord's last discourses in their hands: no one can doubt that the writer of the Epistle writes with those last discourses before him, and uses their language very often. The doctrine of the atonement is different, but does not differ from the earlier statements. It makes Christ as the High Priest Himself 'the Propitiation,' and that in a unique expression; but this is only a strict development of the high-priestly prayer, and certainly in harmony with all apostolic doctrine. There is nothing in the later doctrine of sin which contradicts that of the Gospel. Its relation to Satan, its universality in human nature, its removal by the atonement, are the very same; and if St. John introduces the 'sin unto death,' all we can say is that he has given us a new aspect of the same revelation given us in the Synoptics and the Epistle to the Hebrews. The symbolism of the 'water and the blood,' rightly interpreted in both documents, has in both the same meaning. Failing in their objections, the objectors are reduced to such generalities as the inferiority of tone in the Epistle. But here they render defence needless by differing among themselves. One class follow Baur, calling it a 'weak imitation' of the Gospel; another, following Hilgenfeld, call it a 'splendid reproduction' of the Gospel. For ourselves, we feel in reading the Epistle after the Gospel that we are listening to the same writer, but rather as 'John the theologian' than 'John the evangelist;' that he is no longer writing, so to speak, under the overpowering influence of his Master present in the flesh and chaining him to the simple record of what he saw and heard, but, still in the presence of the

same Master exalted to heaven, is calmly reviewing the wonderful past, and giving his own and his brethren's experience of its present effect, and exhorting all to the perfection which the work of Christ has rendered possible. The current allusions to the monotony, repetition, and illogical dogmatism of the paragraphs deserve no comment: the soul that is formed by the Gospel will feel that the Epistle wants no commendation or defence of man. But what we would say has been better said by Ewald, in an oft-quoted sentence of his work on St. John's writings: 'Here, as in the Gospel, the author retires to the background, unwilling to speak of himself, and still less to base anything on his own name and reputation: notwithstanding that he meets his reader, not as the calm narrator, but as writing a letter, in which he exhorts and teaches as an apostle, and moreover the only surviving apostle. The same delicacy and diffidence, the same lofty calmness and composure, the same truly Christian humility, cause him to recede as an apostle, and to say so little about himself: his only aim is to counsel and warn, reminding his readers simply of the sublime truths they have already received. The higher he stands, the less disposed is he to depress his "brethren" by the weight of his authority and commands. But he knew himself and who he was: every word reveals plainly that none but himself could thus speak and counsel and warn. The unique consciousness which an apostle growing old must have, and which the "beloved" apostle must have had in a pre-eminent degree; the tranquil superiority, clearness, and decidedness of all his views of Christian truth; the rich experience of a long life, steeled in victorious struggle with every unchristian element; the glowing language, concealed under and bursting through this calmness, the force of which we instinctively feel when it commends love to us as the highest attainment of Christianity,—all these are found so wonderfully united in this Epistle that every reader of that age would, without needing any further intimation, discern at once who the writer was. But, when the circumstances required it, the author plainly indicates that he once stood in the nearest possible relation to Jesus (chap. i. 1–3, v. 3–6, iv. 16), precisely as he is wont to give the same indication in the Gospel. And all this is so artless and simple—so entirely without the faintest trace of imitation in either case—that all must of necessity perceive the self-same apostle to be the writer of both documents.'

Another quotation may be added: 'Let it be noted how admirably the character of the Epistle accords with what we otherwise know of the character of the apostle. On the one side, there is a keen severity in the severance of light from darkness, and of the world from God's kingdom, which betrays the son of thunder; indeed, we find such an ethical sharpness of definition as makes every sin an evidence of the Satanic nature (comp. chap. iii. 4–11), such indeed as occurs nowhere else throughout the compass of Scripture. But, on the other side, and concurrently with this, we feel a breath of most pathetic and most inward affection, from a spirit overflowing with love, and strong in peaceful rest, such as corresponds with those traditions concerning his old age which appeal so forcibly to our hearts. . . . That the aged disciple, who through a long life had by faith and love attained so close a relation to his Lord, was so thoroughly pervaded by the riches of the grace that came to him through Christ that all the hatred of the world and raging of antichrist failed to disturb his deep repose, that he could not indeed well understand how their influence could be felt at all, is perfectly imaginable in his case. Simon Peter before this, in his Second Epistle, when the times were disturbed and the lie had raised its head aloft, felt himself impelled with all the energy of his love to transpose himself back into the days when he had his Master's society, and also with all the energy of his hope to propel himself forward to the time of the perfected

kingdom of God. So also our apostle, following his character out, and in harmony with his deep interior nature, must needs, in his old age especially, have still more abundantly felt himself impelled, while enemies raged around him, and the more they raged, to fasten his deep thought upon the glory of Him whom he had seen as He was, and whom he hoped to see as He is. Thus, in conclusion, it may be said that it is perfectly clear how St. John, with such a personality as his, was precisely so affected as the Epistle reveals him, so full of peace in a time of fiercest conflict, so much more occupied with positive construction than with defensive polemic against enemies' (Haupt, *The First Epistle of St. John*, p. 366, Clark's Translation).

A long list of parallel phrases might be exhibited, such as could not be drawn up from any other two books even of the same writer. More than thirty such passages are literally common to the two; more than half of them linking the Epistle with the Farewell Discourses, John xii.–xvii. As Mr. Sinclair says: 'There the tender, loving, receptive, truthful, retentive mind of the bosom-friend had been particularly necessary; at that great crisis it had been, through the Spirit of God, particularly strong; and the more faithfully St. John had listened to His master, and reproduced Him, the deeper the impression was which the words made on his own mind, and the more likely he was to dwell on them in another work instead of on his own thoughts and words. The style may be his own both in Gospels and Epistles, modified by that of our Lord; the thoughts are also the thoughts of Jesus' (Introd. to this Epistle in Bishop Ellicott's *Comm.*). In the Introduction to St. John's Gospel in the present work it has been said, on the general question of the relation of St. John's style and our Lord's: 'Nor, further, is the supposition with which we are now dealing needed to explain the fact that the tone of much of our Lord's teaching in this Gospel bears a striking resemblance to that of the First Epistle of John. Why should not the Gospel explain the Epistle rather than the Epistle the Gospel? Why should not John have been formed upon the model of Jesus rather than the Jesus of this Gospel be the reflected image of himself? Surely it may be left to all candid minds to say whether, to adopt only the lowest supposition, the creative intellect of Jesus was not far more likely to mould His disciple to a conformity with itself, than the receptive spirit of the disciple to give birth by its own efforts to that conception of a Redeemer which so infinitely surpasses the loftiest image of man's own creation.' This opens up a subject of deep interest, which may be profitably pursued in that Introduction. We have another purpose here. The quotations are not simply quotations, even if they may bear that name at all. In no case are they such as an imitator or forger would have employed. They are the writings of the same man; but not of one who has his own earlier document before him. Here we may refer to Canon Westcott's Introduction to the Gospel (*Speaker's Commentary*), who says: 'The relation of the Gospel of St. John to his Epistles is that of a history to its accompanying comment or application. The First Epistle presupposes the Gospel either as a writing or as an oral instruction. But while there are numerous and striking resemblances both in form and thought between the Epistle and the Evangelist's record of the Lord's discourses and his own narrative, there are still characteristic differences between them. In the Epistle the doctrine of the Lord's true and perfect humanity (*sarx*) is predominant; in the Gospel, that of His Divine glory (*doxa*). The burden of the Epistle is "the Christ is Jesus;" the writer presses his argument from the Divine to the human, from the spiritual and ideal to the historical. The burden of the Gospel is "Jesus is the Christ;" the writer presses his argument from the human to the Divine, from the historical to the spiritual and ideal. The former is the natural position of the preacher, and the

latter of the historian.' Then, after mentioning some of the differences we have dwelt upon, Dr. Westcott goes on: 'Generally, too, it will be found on a comparison of the closest parallels, that the apostle's own words are more formal in expression than the words of the Lord which he records. The Lord's words have been moulded by the disciple into aphorisms in the Epistles: their historic connection has been broken. At the same time, the language of the Epistle is, in the main, direct, abstract, and unfigurative. The apostle's teaching, so to speak, is "plain," while that of the Lord was "in proverbs" (John xvi. 25). . . . Generally it will be felt that there is a decisive difference (so to speak) in the atmosphere of the two books. In the Epistle St. John deals freely in the truths of the Gospel in direct conflict with the characteristic perils of his own time; in the Gospel he lives again in the presence of Christ and of the immediate enemies of Christ, while he brings out the universal significance of events and teaching not fully understood at the time.' Besides being illustrative of what has been laid down, such extracts as these are the best material for an Introduction to our Epistle.

III. But when we come more specifically to the relation between the apostle and his readers, we are left very much to conjecture. Ancient tradition tells us that St. John, after the death of St. Paul, 64 A.D., laboured, or rather exercised an apostolical pastorate, in Ephesus for many years. It has been thought not improbable that during his banishment to Patmos, and for some reason not known, he wrote this encyclical or catholic Epistle to the churches from which he had been separated. Had that been the case, however, there would almost certainly have been some reference to his banishment; we must therefore assume that he wrote it from Ephesus either before or after that exile. In the Apocalypse the seven leading churches of his apostolical district are mentioned, but mentioned as addressed by the Lord through the Spirit; hence it might almost seem as if the apostle reverently abstained from mentioning by name the churches to which he wrote in person. There can be no question, however, that the communication has the character of an Epistle, though without the form impressed upon the majority of other similar writings of the New Testament. In this respect it is only a little more free than the Epistle to the Hebrews and that of St. James. The absence of the epistolary form is observable only at the outset and at the close: throughout the course of the communication we have more addresses and more epistolary hints than in any other book of the New Testament. In fact, it was an encyclical Epistle, the inscription of which was different for every church to which it was sent, and has not been preserved. It may be sufficient merely to mention the strange tradition which originated with Augustine, or to which he gave permanence, that it was addressed *ad Parthos*, 'to the Parthians.' As the Greek Church has no trace of this inscription, and it was unknown to the West before the time of Augustine, the only concern we have with it is to account for its origin. That, however, is not easy. It has been conjectured that the term Parthos is a corruption of the Greek *parthenous*, or virgins; and that the inscription given by the allegorizing Clement of Alexandria to the Second Epistle, 'to the virgins,' was by degrees attached to all the Epistles. But the matter is little more than a curiosity of early literature: suffice that all indications point not to Parthia but to Asia Minor for the circle of readers whom St. John addressed.

There is no indication in the Epistle itself that may be relied on for the determination of its date and circle of readers. The 'last time' has no significance here; the absence of reference to Jerusalem only suggests that the catastrophe had long taken place; persecutions are not referred to as present or impending; Jewish opposition is a thing of the past, and the only distinction is between the

Church and the world; and finally the writer, addressing no particular church, writes as one far advanced in age, who had pastoral relations to his readers of long standing. All these point to a time coinciding with the banishment to Patmos. A few sentences from Haupt's able General Review, at the close of his work on the Epistle, may incline the reader to study his whole discussion. 'The churches of Asia Minor, and especially the Ephesian, to which we are directed by early tradition, had been introduced into Christendom through the long and assiduous activity of the apostle of the Gentiles, with advantages beyond most others. We at once understand, therefore, why our Epistle has no organizing character, but rather that of nurturing and establishing. Further, that the distinction between Judaism and heathenism as two defined hostile camps is so entirely absurd, is natural enough at the end of the first century, and so long after the destruction of Jerusalem; for, after that event, the power of the Jews in persecuting the Christians lay simply in their hiding themselves behind the Gentiles as the "world." . . . The enemy of these days was, in a peculiar sense, the spirit of false prophecy. We know, indeed, that even in the lifetime of the apostle heresy had been in Ephesus matured by Cerinthus; and not only so, but the very omissions of the Epistle may be perfectly understood when it is referred to the Corinthian Gnosis. All this proves that the Epistle must have been written later than the other New Testament Scriptures, and that it might well have been written by St. John. . . . If, on the ground of the tradition that the apostle was a long time in Patmos, we assume that he wrote his letter from that island, the hypothesis will lighten up the whole. . . . In it there is neither any greeting from any church, nor any greeting to one. The absence of the latter may be accounted for by the encyclical character. But how shall the absence of the former be accounted for? It was natural that the apostle should omit that, if he happened at the time to be located in no church whatever. . . . He lived in relative seclusion, separated at least from all the excited movements of the outer world. For, on this small island, he could only to a slight extent exercise any influence, or carry on any work of an external character. To him at his age it would be matter of doubt whether he could win back that larger influence, whether the time of active work was not for ever gone. Then, the great concern was to wait upon the blessed manifestation of the Lord. The more he was shut in from exterior life, the more did he retire into the depths of his own being, and draw upon that which his faith gave him for his own good, and what he, with the whole Church, was called to attain through that faith. Thus the internal and ethical characteristics of the Epistle are no less explained than the apocalyptical tendency of its strain.'

These remarks may not carry conviction as to the Patmos theory, but they corroborate what appears to be the only conclusion from a general review, that the Epistle was written after the Gospel and independently of it; that it was, although the writer might not fully know in how complete a sense, an encyclical or catholic Epistle for the Ephesian Churches and the whole Christian world; and that it was a pendant not so much to the Fourth Gospel as to all the Gospels and the whole literature of the New Testament.

IV. To whose who fully accept the overruling providence of the Holy Spirit in the construction and arrangement of the New Testament, it will appear a matter of no small importance that St. John's First Epistle is the last doctrinal treatise of Divine revelation. This being so, we may expect to find in it certain characteristics appropriate to a position of such dignity. These characteristics we certainly find. The historical disclosure of truth, continued so long in a series of wonderful dispensations, reaches its close. The faith delivered to the saints is now delivered

in its consummate form: development of doctrine comes to an end in the Bible, that development of dogma may have its beginning. Following this hint, we may glance by way of introduction at some of the dogmatic features of this final document of the Bible.

It may be said, generally, that here we have the complete theological system of St. John himself before us: condensed into a few chapters. What is sometimes called the Pauline Christianity—the Christian doctrine which St. Paul was inspired to unfold—is diffused through a great number of writings, issued at intervals during a generation, and for the most part in the midst of manifold labours. The Johannine Christianity—the Christian doctrine which St. John was inspired to unfold—was given in a few chapters and once for all. In the Gospel and in the Revelation he does not speak in his own person as a teacher; though in them, and especially in the Gospel, the essentials of his peculiar view of Christianity are to be found. The Prologue of the Gospel alone contains the writer's own theology: in all the rest he is silent and the Lord speaks. But in the Epistle we have himself as a teacher throughout; and in no part of the New Testament does the voice of personal authority sound so clearly and emphatically. There is no portion of the New Testament in which are more of the 'signs of an apostle.' The beloved disciple, and the elect apostle, has so to speak his supremacy here. He gives his own system of truth in all its completeness. Though there is a remarkable recurrence of one or two themes—so much so that the Epistle has often been charged with monotony and repetition—we perceive, if we examine it carefully, that it contains an entire compendium of the Gospel as it was poured into the mould of the last apostle's spirit. God, the Triune God, Evil in the universe and in man, the person of Christ the Redeemer, the atonement as a propitiation of God and the destroyer of sin, righteousness and sonship and sanctification, perfected and perfecting love, antichrists and the coming of the Christ for their destruction, the eternal death of the reprobate and the high privileges of the saints, are topics that run through the whole round of cardinal fundamentals, and they are all presented in their final and perfected form under the hand of the apostle. He does not say that he is giving the sum of Christian verities; still less that he is supplementing and perfecting those given by others; but he is really doing this without saying so, and the result is a body of Christian truth more complete on the whole than any other one document of the Christian faith presents. Probably any of the doctrines, taken alone, may be found more fully developed elsewhere; but nowhere else are they all combined as in this Epistle. The Beginning and the End are linked in a most emphatic manner: in a manner almost peculiar to St. John. And between them is every prominent truth of evangelical revelation in brief but distinct outline.

And it is the voice of a teacher of doctrine as the foundation of morals. It is customary to speak of St. John as 'the apostle of love,' who shows us the supreme importance of practical in opposition to theoretic religion. But this is not the right view of the matter. This Epistle enforces no ethics which are not based upon revealed doctrine. The reader will observe everywhere that the exhibition of duty has not far of, generally hard by, the foundation of revealed truth, a fact on which it rests. This Epistle is the most perfect example in the New Testament of the indissoluble connection between doctrine and duty: the doctrine always underlying the duty; doctrine and duty being exhibited together; and duty being ever the end and consummation of doctrine. Other parts of the New Testament, however, contain all this. But St. John's Epistle is pre-eminent as making Love the bond of perfection between doctrine and ethics. Love is perfected here in every sense: it has its

perfection in God, for in this Epistle alone does revelation say that 'God is love;' and it has its perfection in man, for 'perfected in us' occurs again and again. There is no grander sentence in the Bible than this, when connected with those just quoted: 'Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' The doctrine of the atonement is the foundation of the ethics of perfect self-sacrifice. The entire Epistle—with the two smaller Epistles as its appendages—perfectly illustrates St. Paul's saying that 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' The perfection possible to the disciples of Christ is exhibited as the supreme triumph of the love of God in us. First, 'Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected:' the Epistle makes all obedience a manifestation of love, and in all obedience only is the love of God perfected. Again, 'If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us:' the innumerable obligations of charity are not dwelt upon, but they are all summed up as the outgoings of God's own love, or God Himself, from the heart into the life. Finally, we read: 'He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in Him. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.' Nothing less than the entire consecration of the soul in fellowship with the indwelling Trinity is here; and such a consecration as opens to human desire and hope the most enlarged prospect of the triumph of perfect love. Let these three passages be studied in their harmony, and it will be seen that the view they give is one that is not so distinct in any other part of Scripture, and one that gives a character of its own to this final document.

V. The text of the Epistle has come down to us in good preservation. Only a few questions of textual criticism have occupied much attention. These are referred to in the commentary; but three of them may be briefly noticed here. One is the passage, chap. ii. 23, which has commonly been italicised in our translation as of doubtful genuineness. Its right to a place in the text has been abundantly vindicated. The second is the reading which changes 'confesseth not' in chap. iv. 3 for 'annulleth:' seeming to mean, as quoted by Latin Fathers, *solvit*, as if the error were the dissolution of the two natures in our Lord's person. It seems hard to resist the evidence in favour of this highly theological reading. But the latest revision has put it only in the margin. The third is of course the well-known passage of 'the three witnesses,' hitherto John v. 7. This passage will be found still within brackets, and it is not dismissed without notice in the exposition. But it is now all but universally admitted that it is spurious.

The case, in fact, is very strong indeed against the passage. It is found in no Greek codex earlier than the eleventh century; and had it been extant in the East in any form, it would certainly have been used in the Arian controversy. Its first insertion into the Greek Testament was simultaneous with the beginning of the printed text; it was honoured with a place in the great edition printed at Complutum A.D. 1522. During the sixteenth century it crept into a few Greek codices. One of them was a copy of the Complutensian Polyglot; the others seem by internal evidence to have been translated from the Vulgate. Among these is the Codex Britannicus (preserved in Dublin), which may be said to have indirectly procured the verse its place in our modern editions. Erasmus was induced by it to give the passage a place in his edition; and his example was followed by other editors and the Textus Receptus. The Old Versions down to A.D. 600 do not contain it; the Vulgate itself in its earliest and best editions being without it. The most recent editions of the Greek Testament altogether exclude the passage.

Its origin is a problem that will probably never be solved. Possibly some Greek

gloss in the margin kept its place until it was in some copies attracted into the text. There is a remarkable passage in Cyprian (*de Unit. Eccles.*), which may shed some light on it: 'Dicit Dominus, Ego et Pater unum sumus (John x. 30), *et iterum* de Patre et Filio et Spiritu Sancto *scriptum est, et tres unum sunt*, et quisquam credit, hanc unitatem de Divinâ firmitate venientem, sacramentis cœlestibus cohærentem, scindi in ecclesia posse.' In these words Cyprian might have been giving a Trinitarian explanation of 'the Spirit and the water and the blood;' but he might also have been quoting from an old Latin Version. In any case, this only gives a hint as to the way in which the reference to the Trinity might have been placed in the margin as an interpretation of the subsequent allegorical verse, and thence have crept into the text. For the rest, we may say with Ebrard: 'Granted it not to be impossible that Greek codices may be yet discovered which shall contain the clause, we must direct our critical judgment by the evidence of the documents which we have; not of those which we have not, and of the existence of which we as yet know nothing.' It is usual to lay much stress on the internal evidence which condemns the passage. But that is a precarious argument; and one that is hard to maintain against a large number of divines and commentators who have, not only in the Roman communion but among Protestants, maintained the obligation of retaining them. Here we may quote Ebrard again: 'On the internal arguments against the authenticity we do not lay any great stress. That St. John, who wrote those passages in the Gospel, chap. i. 1, x. 30, xvi. 15, could not have given expression to the thought that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit *are one*, is no more than the unwarranted assertion of subjective hypercriticism. Again, that he who elsewhere opposes God to Word, and Father to Son, should here insert Word between Father and Spirit, involves no direct impossibility. It is indeed strange, as also is the adjective Holy, omitted from chap. iv. 1 downwards. There is nothing in the interpolation directly conflicting with the order of thought, especially if we adopt the arrangement confirmed by the oldest citations in Vigilius, Fulgentius, Cassius, and Etherius, which inverts the order of the verses. According to the right exposition of the *witness* which refers it, not to the demonstration that Jesus and no other is the promised Messiah, but to the testimony as to whose might it is through which the world is overcome, St. John would first mention the three factors of God's power on earth. . . . After these, he would introduce the Three-One in heaven, Who from heaven sustains the testimony of His church.' We will close with the words of Haupt (the First Epistle of St. John, Clark's Translation, p. 312): 'In spite of my private conviction of the genuineness of the reading *annulleth Jesus*, chap. iv. 3, I could not decide to put it into the text; for our editions must keep close to the substance of the manuscripts. But to preserve chap. v. 7 cannot be justified by any means. The most acute argument that has to this hour been adduced in its favour is represented by the venerable Bengel, who asserts that here the analysis of the Epistle is summed up in one point, the Trinity being the governing principle of its arrangement. . . . As to the dogmatic shortsightedness which bewails in its loss the removal of a prop for the doctrine of the Absolute Trinity, this might be expected in lay circles, but ought not to be found among theologians. A doctrine which should depend on one such utterance, and in its absence lose its main support, would certainly be liable to suspicion. Omitting the verse, we have in this very section the doctrine of the Trinity in the form in which Scripture generally presents it: the Father, who witnesses, ver. 9; the Son, who is attested, ver. 6 seq.; the Holy Spirit, through whom the Son is witnessed by the Father, ver. 6: the passage being thus very similar to the narrative of our Lord's baptism.'

VI. Perhaps no book of the New Testament has suffered more than this Epistle

from arbitrary attempts to force upon it an order of thought and subject it to analytical arrangement. In this, however, there have been two extremes. The ancient expositors, and the earlier ones of modern times, thought too lightly of St. John's order: Augustine led the way by speaking of the Epistle as speaking many things mainly about love. To them the writer was a contemplative mystic, who followed the sacred impulse whithersoever it led him; and wrote down his meditations, partly about sound doctrine and partly about pure charity in aphoristic sentences. The commentators who have annotated the Epistle during the last hundred and fifty years have been disposed to go to the other extreme, and to find too exact and minute a distribution. Certainly the apostle has a train of thought in his mind, and writes according to a plan; but it is equally obvious as we read that he turns aside here and there from his main current, and also that he revolves round occasionally to the same ideas and words. Too much stress has been laid upon the specification at the beginning, 'These things we write that your joy may be fulfilled:' it is not necessary to regard this as indicating a plan in St. John's mind. So with the purpose mentioned at the close, 'that ye may know that ye have eternal life:' the apostle does not mean to say that it has been his one leading design to lead them to this experimental knowledge.

It is plain enough that there is an exordium; and equally plain that the concluding verses of the Epistle are a peroration, gathering up the whole into a few final sentences. Between these two the idea of the fellowship of Christians with God seems to rule the whole: first, as a fellowship in light and holiness, viewed under a variety of aspects down to the close of the second chapter. Then the fellowship is rather that of the life in and with God which the Christian sonship imparts: this governing the Epistle in the third chapter. Then follows the fellowship in faith down to the concluding paragraph. But the vindication of this order must be left to the exposition itself.

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF

JOHN.

CHAPTER I. 1–4.

The Exordium.

1 THAT which [a] was from the beginning, which [b] we have heard, which [c] we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our [d] hands have handled, of the Word
2 of life;[1] (For[2] [e] the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and [f] bear witness, and shew[3] unto you that eternal life which
3 was [g] with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which [h] we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly [i] our fellowship is with
4 the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, [k] that your[4] joy may be full.[5]

[a] Jo. i. 1.
[b] Acts iv. 20.
[c] Jo. xix. 35; 2 Pet. i. 16.
[d] Lu. xxiv. 39; Jo. xx. 27.
[e] Jo. i. 4; 1 Tim. iii. 16.
[f] Ch. iv. 14; Jo. xv. 27.
[g] Jo. i. 1, 2.
[h] Acts iv. 20.
[i] Jo. xiv. 20–23; 1 Cor. i. 9.
[k] Jo. xv. 11; 2 Jo. 12.

[1] which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life
[2] And [3] declare [4] our [5] fulfilled

CONTENTS. The apostle introduces this catholic Epistle by a compendious description of the object, nature, and design of the apostolical announcement concerning the Incarnate Word of life. Its object is the Eternal Logos who was manifested as the life; its nature is the testimony of personal witnesses of the incarnation; and its design is the establishment of fellowship with the Father and the Son. The immediate purpose of the present communication is the perfecting of the common joy of writer and readers. This Introduction resembles the Prologue of the Gospel; but with such variations as the one writer of both would himself be likely to make, when addressing readers of both. The construction is peculiar, but perfectly regular: its peculiarity being that the whole mystery of the incarnation, and its evidence to the apostles, is poured forth in one long contemplative sentence, which has the secret of the incarnation itself as the manifested life in its heart as a parenthesis. But over the whole sentence as well as the parenthesis hovers always the idea that the apostles are witnesses: the Gospel Prologue being in this respect altogether different.

Ver. 1. The object of the apostolical announcement may be said to be complete in the first verse: what is added afterwards in the parenthesis limits that object or more closely defines it by expanding one term which occurs in it, 'the life.' Remembering that 'we declare' rules the paragraph in the distance and is coming, we must begin with the words **concerning the Word of life:** the Logos who is Himself the life eternally and to the creature imparts life. In the Prologue of the Gospel there is no 'concerning,' because the Person of the Incarnate is there the immediate subject: here and throughout our Epistle it is not so much His Person as the blessedness and benefits of fellowship with Him which are the immediate subject. Again, remembering that the parenthesis is also coming with its closer explanation, we distinguish the announcement as twofold. First, concerning the eternal being of the Logos, **that which was from the beginning:** the 'was' is really, as in the Gospel, opposed to 'became flesh,' though this latter is here unexpressed; 'from the beginning' we shall find used in various senses, but here its meaning is determined by the first words of the

Gospel, as also by 'with the Father' in the next verse: it is 'from the depths of eternity,' as in St. Paul's 'chosen from the beginning' (2 Thess. ii. 13), and St. John is as it were unconsciously looking back from the moment of the incarnation. In chap. ii. 13 we have 'Him that was from the beginning,' but here the neuter 'that which' is used because the thought of the supreme mystery combines the whole verse into one great object of contemplation. Secondly, concerning His whole historical appearance on earth, seen of men as well as of angels, of which the apostles were the ordained and special witnesses, we read: **that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled.** These clauses must be taken together, and viewed in their various relations. The first two refer to the entire manifestation as one great permanent whole, in the perfect-present; the other two refer to certain express manifestations which were in the apostles' memory for ever, such as the special revelations of the 'glory as of the Only-begotten' before and after the resurrection. Then we must note the ascensive order: from hearing to seeing with the eyes, to contemplation of the deeper mystery behind, and the actual contact with the Incarnate One. Yet the testimony rises and falls as an arch: it springs from the simple hearing, which certainly includes the testimony of others such as the Baptist, to the much higher seeing with the eyes and beholding as it were without the eyes, and then descends again to the touching, which was limited to individuals and limited generally.

Ver. 2. We term this a parenthesis; but the 'and' must suggest that it is not a parenthesis in our modern sense, as it includes and condenses the whole subject in its completeness. **And the life was manifested:** it is not here 'the Word became flesh;' but the life which inheres eternally in the Logos, as the fountain of existence to the universe, came forth into visibility as the **eternal life**, so called to distinguish it from the life simply that had been manifested apart from the incarnation. The two are one, however, in the personal Logos, for the latter, the eternal, is **even the life**, the same life **which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.** The three verbs of testimony, if carefully allotted, explain this more clearly. **We have seen and bear witness** refer to the 'Life' absolutely: the apostolic complete eye-witness becomes an official testimony to the Person of Jesus. The chief thing, however, here is not that, but the announcement which follows: **and declare unto you the eternal life.** Our Lord is never once called 'eternal Life,' but 'the Life.' 'Even the life which was with the Father' singles out the life from the compound term, and expresses, as nearly as human words can express it, an eternal relation of personality to the Father corresponding to His temporal relation to us. 'With God' in the Gospel becomes 'with the Father' here, to mark the personality of that relation.

Ver. 3. The great sentence goes on by selection. All that precedes is resumed and summed up as **that which we have seen and heard**—seen coming first, because of the word in the previous verse—**declare we unto you also**, as it was manifested to us. There is no reference yet to his readers specifically. Witness, testimony, declaration, either generally by the Gospel or by writing in particular, are the order: much of the declaration is universal; and out of that rises the special Epistle. The object of the universal announcement, which these readers had already heard and rejoiced in, was **in order that ye may have**—not obtain or hold fast or increase in, but have generally—**fellowship with us.** Fellowship is union in the possession or enjoyment of something shared in common: that common element being variously viewed as God Himself, imparted through the knowledge and eternal life and hopes of the Gospel; or the external seals of communion of the Church; or even the spirit and gifts of its charity. In our Epistle we have only the first; and in this sentence it is fellowship with the apostles in their experience of the manifestation of the Son, in their enjoyment of the supernatural, true, eternal life which united them with God.

But, as if to preclude any perversion of this thought, it is added: **and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.** It is evident that the apostle does not linger for a moment on any fellowship that falls below the highest. 'Our fellowship,' still spoken generally of all Christians, is with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ, that is, His Son as Mediator, and therefore common to the Father and to us. He is the element as well as the bond of the communion; and 'the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. i. 9) is through His Spirit, common to Him and to us, of whom mention will be made in due course, whose common possession by believers is 'the communion of the Holy Ghost' (2 Cor. xiii. 14). But all this is not in the text. That simply expresses the Saviour's prayer in another form: 'that they may all be one, as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us.' What is common to the Father and to us, and common to the Son and to us—for the 'and' introduces a distinction—is not here said; but in the Lord's Prayer we read, 'All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine;' and again, 'I in them, and Thou in Me;' and once more, 'That the love wherewith Thou lovedst Me may be in them, and I in them' (John xvii. 21, 23, 26). It is observable, and the observation is our best comment, that the term 'fellowship' in this supreme sense occurs no more; but always reappears in the form of the mutual indwelling of the Trinity and the believer who 'abideth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He gave us' (chap. iii. 24). Here are all the gradations of the fellowship in God and among the saints with God.

Ver. 4. Now follows the specific design of this Epistle. **And these things we write, that our joy may be fulfilled.** 'Our' joy, our common joy, as in the same prayer: 'that they may have My joy fulfilled in them' (John xvii. 13). Joy is the utmost elevation of 'eternal life' viewed not as purity or strength, but as blessedness; and here again the best comment is the fact that the word never recurs, but we find, where that **might have** been expected, always 'eternal life.'

CHAPTER I. 5–II. 28.

Fellowship with God as Holiness or Light.

5 [a] THIS then is the message [1] which we have heard of him,[2] and declare unto you,[3] that [b] God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 [c] If we say that we have fellowship with him, [d] and walk in [4] darkness, we lie, and [e] do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he [f] is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, [g] and the blood of Jesus Christ [5] his Son cleanseth us from all sin. [h] If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [i] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and [k] just [6] to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, [l] we make him a liar, and [m] his word is not in us.

CHAP. II. 1. [n] My little children, these things write I unto you, that [o] ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have [p] an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ [q] the righteous: And he is [r] the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins* [7] *of* the whole world.

3 And hereby we do know [8] that we know him, if we keep his 4 commandments. [s] He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not 5 his commandments, [t] is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso [u] keepeth his word, in him verily [v] is the love of God 6 perfected: [9] hereby [w] know [10] we that we are in him. He that saith [x] he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, [y] even as he walked.

7 Brethren,[11] I write no new commandment unto you, but an [z] old commandment which ye had from the beginning. [a] The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the 8 beginning.[12] [b] Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: [c] because the darkness 9 is past,[13] and the [d] true light now [14] shineth. [e] He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in [15] darkness even until 10 now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, [f] and 11 there is none occasion of stumbling in him: [g] But he that hateth his brother is in [15] darkness, and walketh in [16] darkness, and [h] knoweth not whither he goeth, because that [16] darkness hath blinded his eyes.

[a] Ch. iii. 11.
[b] Jas. i. 17.
[c] 2 Cor. vi. 14.
[d] Jo. xii. 35.
[e] Jo. iii. 21.
[f] 2 Tim. vi. 16.
[g] Acts xx. 28; Heb ix. 14.
[h] Rom. iii. 19; Job xv. 14.
[i] Ps. xxxii. 5.
[k] Jo. xvii. 25; Rom. iii. 26.
[l] Ch. v. 10.
[m] Jo. v. 38.
[n] Jo. xiii. 33; Gal. iv. 19; vers. 12, 28; ch. iii. 7.
[o] Tit. ii. 12.
[p] Rom. viii. 34; Jo. xiv. 16.
[q] 2 Cor v 21.
[r] Rom. iii. 25; ch. iv. 10.
[s] Ch. iv. 14; Jo. xiii. 32.
[t] Ch. i. 6, iv. 20.
[u] Jo. viii. 44; ch. i. 8.
[v] Jo. xiv. 23.
[w] Ch. iv. 12.
[x] Ch. iv. 13.
[y] Jo. xv. 4.
[z] Mat. xi. 29.
[a] 2 Jo. 5.
[b] Lev. xix. 18.
[c] Jo. xiii. 34.
[d] Rom. xiii. 12; Eph. v. 8.
[e] Jo. i. 4, 9.
[f] 1 Cor. xiii. 2.
[g] Jo. xi. 10; 2 Pet. i. 8–10.
[h] Ch. iii. 10–18.
[i] Jo. xii. 35; ch. i. 6.

[1] And this is the message
[2] from him
[3] announce unto you
[4] *insert* the
[5] *omit* Christ
[6] righteous
[7] omit *the sins of*
[8] perceive we
[9] hath the love of God been perfected
[10] perceive
[11] Beloved
[12] which ye heard
[13] passing away
[14] already
[15] *insert* the
[16] the

12 I write unto you, little children, because [h] your sins are for-
13 given you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known[17] him [i] *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because [m][n] ye have overcome the wicked one.[18] I write[19] unto you, little children, because [n] ye
14 have known[17] the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known[17] him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, [o] because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.[18]

15 [p] Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. [q] If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in
16 him. For all that is in the world, [r] the lust of the flesh, and [s] the lust of the eyes, and [t] the pride[20] of life, is not of the
17 Father, but is of the world. [u] And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: [v] but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

18 Little children, [w] it is the last time:[21] and as ye have heard[22] that [x] antichrist shall come,[23] even now are there[24] [y] many anti-
19 christs; [z] whereby we know that it is the last time.[25] [a] They went out from us, but they were not of us; for [b] if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*,[26] [c] that they might be made manifest that they
20 were not all of us.[27] But ye have [d] an unction[28] from the [e] Holy
21 One, and [f] ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that
22 no lie is of the truth. Who is a[29] liar but [g] he that denieth that [h] Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist,[30] that denieth the Father
23 and the Son. [i] Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [*but*] *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father*
24 *also*.[31] Let that therefore[32] abide in you, which [k] ye have[33] heard from the beginning. If that which ye have[33] heard from the beginning shall remain[34] in you, [l] ye also shall continue[34] in
25 the Son, and in the Father. And [m] this is the promise that he
26 hath promised us, *even* eternal life. These *things* have I written
27 unto you concerning [n] them that seduce you.[35] But the anointing which ye have received[36] of him [o] abideth in you, [p] and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same[37] anointing teacheth you of all things, [q] and is truth,[38] and is no lie, and

[h] Lu. xxiv. 47; Acts xiii. 38.
[i] Ch. i. 1.
[m][n] Ver. 14; ch. iv. 4, v. 18, 19. [n] Jo. xiv. 7.
[o] Eph. vi. 10.
[p] Rom. xii. 2; Col. iii 1, 2.
[q] Mat. vi. 24; Jas. iv. 4.
[r] Rom. xiii. 14.
[s] Eccles. v. 11.
[t] Jas. iv. 16; Isa. xxxix. 2–7.
[u] 1 Cor. vii. 31.
[v] Mat. vii. 24, 25.
[w] Heb. i. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 3.
[x] 2 Thes. ii. 3; ch. iv. 3.
[y] Mat. xxiv. 4; 2 Jo. 7.
[z] 1 Tim. iv. 1.
[a] Acts xx. 30.
[b] Jo. xvii. 12.
[c] 2 Cor. xi. 19.
[d] Ver. 27; 2 Cor. i. 21.
[e] Mk. i. 24.
[f] Ver. 27; Jude 5; Jo. xiv. 26; 1 Cor. i. 5.
[g] Ch. iv. 3; 2 Jo. 7.
[h] Ch. v. 1.
[i] Ch. iv. 15, v. 1.
[k] Ch. iii. 11; 2 Jo. 6.
[l] Ch. i. 3; Jo. xiv. 23.
[m] Jo. x. 28, xvii. 2; ch. i. 2.
[n] Ch. iii. 7; 2 Jo. 7.
[o] Ch. iii. 24.
[p] Heb. viii. 11.
[q] Jo. xiv. 17.

[17] ye know
[18] the evil one
[19] have written
[20] the vainglory
[21] hour
[22] heard
[23] cometh
[24] have there arisen
[25] we perceive that it is the last hour
[26] but *this came to pass*
[27] that they are none of them of us
[28] and ye have an anointing
[29] the
[30] This is the antichrist, *even* he
[31] he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also
[32] As for you, let that
[33] *omit* have
[34] abide
[35] would lead you astray
[36] And as for you, the anointing which ye received
[37] his
[38] true

28 even as it hath [39] taught you, ye shall abide [40] in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, [r] when he shall appear, [41] [s] we may have confidence, and not be ashamed [42] before him [t] at his coming.

[r] Ch. iii. 2; Col iii. 4.
[s] Ch. iii. 21, v. 14; Heb iv. 16.
[t] 1 Thes. ii. 19.

[39] *omit* hath
[40] ye abide
[41] if he shall be manifested
[42] shrink with shame

CONTENTS. First the apostle announces his message that God is light and only light (ver. 5). Then follows (down to chap. ii. 2) a universal statement of the evangelical conditions of fellowship with Him in holiness. In chap. ii. 3–6 the knowledge of God is exhibited as a stimulant to perfect obedience. From ver. 7 to ver. 11 the walk in light is viewed with special reference to brotherly love. Vers. 12–14 bear emphatic and redoubled testimony to the reality and truth of the Christian life generally, and of that of his readers in particular: this being introduced because of the stern contrasts which have preceded and will follow. Then comes an exhortation against the love of the world in its darkness, vers. 15–17. From ver. 18 to ver. 27 believers are warned and protected against the doctrinal errors of the world. And, lastly, in ver. 28, the whole is wound up by a reference to the coming of Christ and the Christian confidence before Him. It may be said that in the seven sections of this first part the whole sum of the Christian estate, from the revelation of sin to full preparation for judgment, is found, with its perfect opposite. But it is governed by the idea of the holiness of the Gospel as a sphere of light; and two points in it, regeneration and faith through the Holy Ghost, are afterwards more fully evolved.

The Message, which is the compendium of Christ's teaching.

Ver. 5. **And**, resuming the 'we have heard' in the Introduction, **this is the message which we have heard from Him**: from 'His Son Jesus Christ' (ver. 3), the 'Him' being enough if we remember the 'fellowship' between the Father and the Son. As the apostle condenses the whole of the revelation of Christ's Person into one word 'was manifested,' so he condenses the sum of His teaching into one word 'message:' this word occurs again only in chap. iii. 11, there concerning love as here concerning light. **And announce unto you**—or, as it were, 're-message' to you; the word being different from declare,—**that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all**: the positive and negative assertion of a truth, so characteristic of this Epistle, here begins; and the two clauses must be combined in one concept. The subject is fellowship with God; that is, the possession of something common to God and to us. This is hereafter love, 'God is love;' here it is light, or unmingled and diffusive holiness. All interpretations that refer this to the essence of God are superfluous. God in His moral nature is to us light: 'light' is one of the predicates of God, as related to moral creatures. It is purely ethical, as love is in the other passage: the Epistle does not contain one reference to the essence of God, or the manifestation of His essence. It is only said that 'no man hath seen Him at any time;' and it is remarkable that the 'glory' so common in the Gospel and Revelation is absent here: the only revelation is in Christ, and as such only a revelation of holiness and love. Holiness in God repels evil, and that to the sinner is its first aspect: 'in Him is no darkness' of sin that can be common to Him and us. But holiness in Him is diffusive, as the light is, or it could not become common to Him and to His saints. Both aspects unite in the atonement which is near at hand with its explanation.

The atoning provision for fellowship in the light of God, viewed generally and with specific reference to the Christian life.

Vers. 6, 7. **If we say**: this is a keyword throughout the section, and marks off the utterly unchristian or antichristian spirit from the perfect opposite which in each case follows it. Surely there is here no union of the apostle with his hearers, any more than in St. Paul's 'shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?' 'We' is the universal we of mankind, though it may have special allusion to the Gnostics, who said precisely, in their theory and practice, what is here alleged. They affirmed that, the seed of light being in them, they might live enveloped in darkness and sensuality without losing the prerogative of their knowledge.

That we have fellowship with him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: we lie in the 'saying,' and in the 'walking' do not the truth; 'the truth' being the outward manifestation, 'as truth is in Jesus' (Eph. iv. 21), of the light of holiness, its revealed directory of word and deed. **But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light.** Mark the decorous emphasis on 'walk' and 'is:' our 'walk' is the fellowship with His 'being.' **We have fellowship one with another**: our fellowship with God is not a lie, but a reality; we 'have' the fellowship that it is supposed we also 'say' we have. And our walk does not impeach us; for provision is made to enable us 'to do the truth.'

And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. The 'and' does not mean 'for,' in the sense that the cleansing is the fellowship; nor 'and therefore,' as if the fellowship were the condition of the cleansing. The converse of that would be nearer the truth. The two clauses are simply co-ordinate; the 'and' as it were explaining and obviating objection. We have fellowship with God—we, the universal 'we,'—but how can these things be, seeing that the light of Divine holiness detects in us nothing but sin? Here then comes in the counterpart or undertone of the great message. We have fellowship with God through His Son, but through Jesus the crucified Saviour, His Son, who 'came by water and blood,' the blood,

however, being made prominent now as the sacrificial expiation carried into the sanctuary for sin. This is the first of many allusions to the atonement, and must be remembered throughout the Epistle: the blood itself—not the Person of Christ here, nor faith in Him, nor faith in it—is the objective ground of our deliverance from sin. Its use here is explained by the leading theme, the holiness of God, the sphere of which distinctively is not the judicial court of satisfaction, nor the household where regeneration is introduced, but the temple where the sacrificial blood was offered. The link between it and our cleansing is not yet exhibited. The term 'cleanseth' is to be similarly explained. It includes in the phraseology of the temple the whole privilege of deliverance from sin viewed as the pollution detected and repelled by holiness: it is not sanctification internal as opposed to justification imputed, but cleansing as including both in the terms of the altar economy. It is the present tense, however; and simply preaches a perpetual removal of all sin as pollution in the sight and in the light of God.

Vers. 8, 9. **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.** Another 'if we say,' strictly co-ordinate with the preceding; the phrases here being variations upon those contained in the former, but, after St. John's manner, with some additional points of force. What is falsely asserted by the anti-christian spirit is the absence of that which renders an atonement necessary in order to walking in the light. Sin has been for the first time introduced, as that within us which answers to darkness, its external sphere: it is wrong, therefore, to interpret it as meaning that we may no longer 'walk in the darkness,' although we 'have' remaining sin within us. The two are synonymous: they who say that they are without sin are by that very token in the darkness; for the light of God's holiness cannot be diffused through the soul until it has first revealed its evil. The rebuke runs parallel with the former, with appropriate change of phrase. Instead of lying simply, we are now self-deceivers, with strong emphasis on this: not without great violence could the perverters of the Christian system have brought themselves to deny the sinfulness of their nature. In fact, none who have ever been Christians could assert this; at least, the Christian revelation as truth cannot have remained in them, even if it had ever entered. 'The truth is not in us,' nor we in it.

If we confess our sins: here we have the universal preamble of the Gospel. This confession is the consenting together of the soul and the law in the conviction and acknowledgment of sin. It is the antithesis of the 'saying that we have no sin;' but, as the antitheses are never strictly coincident, this confession may include, and indeed must include, more than a mere internal sentiment. Two things are to be remembered here: first, that the confessing of 'sins,' not 'sin,' is the expression used in the New Testament for the true repentance that precedes the acceptance of the Gospel; and, secondly, that the word is used by St. John only in two senses, for the fundamental confession of sin and need, and for the fundamental confession of Jesus the Saviour from sin and need. He speaks of 'confessing sin' and 'confessing Christ:' he alone has this combination, and save to express these two he does not employ the word. Accordingly, St. John now introduces in the most full and solemn manner the whole economy of the Gospel as a remedy for sin: in an enlarged statement, and including now another idea, that of righteousness.

He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The two attributes of God, the Administrator in Christ through the Spirit of the redeeming economy, correspond to each other and to the blessings which they guarantee. He is 'faithful' to His holy nature, as it is revealed in His Son, and to the covenant which in Him pledges forgiveness and renewal, and to the express promises of His word: the 'covenant of peace' came to St. John from the Old Testament, and is as much his as St. Paul's, though he never introduces the idea. Hence its antithesis is the making Him a liar; and its counterpart in us is our faith, not here expressed but implied. He is 'righteous' also: this term regards the holiness of God under a new aspect, that of a lawgiver; and declares that His universal faithfulness is pledged in a particular way, namely, as He imparts righteousness to the faith of those who trust in Him. St. John does not adopt the Pauline language, though he implies the Pauline teaching, when he says that God is righteous in order that He may forgive our sins. We receive this release from condemnation from His righteousness; for 'He is just, and the justifier.' He also imparts righteousness,—that point St. John keeps stedfastly in view throughout the Epistle,—but as to that he changes the phrase; and, blending the holiness and righteousness of God in one sentence, declares that He is faithful and righteous also 'that He may cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This is a remarkable combination: the 'cleansing' is strictly from pollution; but here its meaning is enlarged beyond that of ver. 7, and it is a cleansing from the very principle in us that gives birth to sin, our deviation from holy right or our 'unrighteousness.'

Ver. 10. In a third use of the universal **If we say**, the great anti-christian lie is once more repeated, but as usual in a strengthened form,—**that we have not sinned**—that we are not in fact sinners, as the result of a life of which sin has been and is the characteristic. **We make him a liar, and his word is not in us**: the rebuke is also repeated but deepened. We contradict the God of holiness; and His revelation, His word of truth, has absolutely no place in us. This third description of the unchristian nature has no counterpart: that follows immediately, but in another form. In all these sentences, let it be observed once more, the apostle has been laying down great principles. The 'we say' has no specific reference to his readers. But he would not have used the phrase 'if we say,' had he not included a universal application. While he does not declare that sin must remain in those who walk in the light, and that they must have sin in them, he warns them against the 'saying' that they have it not. He does not declare that it is true of all that they have sinned in their renewed life down to the present moment; but he forbids their 'saying' that they have not sinned. Supposing his later testimony concerning the destruction of sin as a principle, and the absence of sin from the regenerate, to be taken in its highest and deepest, that is, in its

most natural sense, still all the sanctified avow themselves sinners who need the atonement until probation ends; they never separate between their new selves and their old in their humble confession; they still identify themselves with their sin, though this may be gone; and 'say' with the sanctified Apostle Paul (1 Tim. i. 15), 'sinners, of whom I am chief,' 'looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life' (Jude, ver. 21).

CHAP. II. 1–3. **My little children**: instead of giving the antithesis to the third 'if any man say,' St. John, the father of the churches of that time, directly addresses those whose character formed that antithesis; and changes the calm statement into affectionate exhortation. **These things I write unto you**—that is, the whole letter, resuming the 'write we' of ver. 4, but with the usual change. Before, it was the apostolic 'we,' and in the presence of the whole Church, with all its heresies around it; now St. John himself begins a more personal address. **That ye sin not**: before, it was the fulness of joy; now it is the utter separation from sin, the negative condition of that. The last tense that had been used was the perfect, referring to the whole life of sin as needing atonement; the aorist is now used: 'that ye sin not at all,' not as a habit, nor in any single act. The antithesis might have run on, 'If we are forgiven and cleansed, we have for ever ceased from sin.' But it does not; for the saint must ever be a sinner as touching the past, and if not dealt with as such it is only through merciful non-imputation; moreover, he may sin again.

And if any man sin. The 'if' does not suppose it necessary, but it clearly implies that 'one'—meaning 'one of us,' though here only used in the Epistle—may commit sin. Yet this will be, in the high teaching of the apostle, a peculiar case, and demands a new application of the atonement to meet it. **We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.** 'We have,' as the common possession of believers—not of the Church; but of every one, for his defence against sin and recovery from it—as certainly ours now as our sin can be. Advocate or Paraclete is the same word as the Comforter of the Gospel. That 'other' Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is in the midst of the Church and in the hearts of believers as a Helper and Teacher, 'making intercession within us;' this Advocate is towards the Father, with allusion to the previous words, 'to forgive us our sins.' He is in a juridical sense the pleader or intercessor of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who must be 'holy, separate from sinners,' 'the Righteous.' The apostle does not say 'the Holy One,' because the very term Advocate makes the heavenly temple as it were a judicial court, and in that court satisfaction and righteousness reign. As 'cleansing from unrighteousness' combines the two ideas, so do Advocate and Propitiation. The third leading idea of the Gospel, our sonship, is involved in 'with the Father.'

And he is the propitiation for our sins. Mark the 'and' which here once more introduces a new thought intended to obviate perversion. Though Christ is not said to be a 'righteous Advocate,' yet His advocacy must represent a righteous cause. He pleads His own atonement; that is Himself, for He 'is' in His Divine-human Person the propitiation: the advocacy is distinct from the atonement, is based upon it, and appeals to it. The word propitiation occurs only here and in chap. iv. throughout the New Testament: it is really the counterpart of the 'blood of Jesus His Son' in chap. i. 6, the administration of the atonement coming between them in chap. i. 9. Christ is in the New Testament 'set forth as a propitiation in His blood' (Rom. iii. 25): a sacrificial offering that, as on the day of atonement to which it refers, averted the wrath of God from the people. He also as High Priest made atonement or 'propitiation for the sins of the people' (Heb. ii. 17), which is here, as in the Septuagint, 'propitiated in the matter of sins' the God of holiness. Uniting these, He is in the present passage Himself the abstract 'propitiation' in His own glorified Person. His prayer for us, issuing from the very treasure-house of atoning virtue, must be acceptable; and, uttered to the Father who 'sent Him' as the propitiation (chap. iv. 14), is one that He 'heareth always' (John xi. 42).

It is then added: **and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.** And why? First, because the apostle would utter his generous testimony, on this his first mention of the world, to the absolute universality of the design of the mission of the 'Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world:' his last mention of it, the second time he says 'the whole world,' will be of a severer character (chap. v. 19). Secondly, he thus intimates that the proper propitiation, as such, was the reconciliation of the Divine holiness and love in respect to all sins at once and in their unity, while the advocacy based upon it refers to special sins: on the one hand, no other atonement is necessary; on the other, that must avail if penitence secures the advocacy of Him who offered it once for all. Lastly, as we doubt not, the apostle thus ends a discussion, the fundamental object of which was to set forth universally and in general the way in which the Gospel offers to all mankind fellowship with the light of God's holiness.

Fellowship in the knowledge of God: obedience, love, and union, 3–6.

The best account that can be given of this section—more aphoristic than any other—is that it lays down certain principles, and introduces certain terms, which become the keynotes of the remainder: each begins here, and returns again and again, while few are afterwards added.

Ver. 3. The word fellowship now vanishes from the Epistle. The first substitute is knowledge; a term that is not without allusion to the Gnostic watchword, but soon passes beyond the transitory reference. It is the gnosis of the anti-christian sect, which St. Paul, not renouncing the term, exalted into epignosis: St. John retrieves it, and stamps it with the same dignity that he impresses on the word love.

And hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments. The knowing is a word which may be said to be in this Epistle sanctified entirely to God and the experience of Divine things: the knowing Him and the knowing that we know Him, or, in St. Paul's language, 'knowing the proof' of Him. We cannot better explain the word to ourselves than by closely connecting it with the fellowship that precedes. All knowledge is the communion of the mind with its object: the object as it were and the knowing subject have in common the secret nature of the object. To 'know Christ' is to enter into the

'fellowship of His suffering and resurrection.' To know God is to have that which may be known of God made common to Him and to our minds: His holy nature, His truth, His love. Obviously this knowledge of God is its own evidence to ourselves; the very word says that. Yet the apostle adds, in a phrase quite unique in Scripture, 'we know that we know Him:' we know our own knowledge; that is, the secret of our true knowledge, its effect, is common to our experiencing and our reflecting mind, to our consciousness as the union of the two. That secret as deliverance from sin has already been dwelt on: now the positive side is brought in; we are privy to our obedience as flowing from the nature of God in us, 'if we keep His commandments.' These were given us by Christ; Christ is God and the 'Him' of this passage in the unity of the Father.

Ver. 4. **Hence he that saith, I know him**—the 'we' has become 'he,' according to St. John's habit of changing the phrase and making its force more keen and direct,—**and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.** We are sent back to chap. i. 8, 10; as he lied who said that he had no sin, and the truth of God was not in him, so he lies, and is without the indwelling truth, who, professing to know God in His Son, obeys Him not.

Ver. 5. **But whoso keepeth his word**: this phrase is our Lord's, both in St. John's Gospel and in the Apocalypse. Examination will show that the 'keeping' is more interior than the 'doing,' including that sacred reverence for the principle of obedience which is its permanent or abiding safeguard in the soul: 'because thou hast kept My word, I will keep thee' (Rev. iii. 8, 10). But St. John never speaks of the law: it is the 'word' as the central expression of the mind of God which as precept is 'the commandment,' and branches out into 'the commandments.' Observe that the 'if' has now vanished, while the individual 'whoso' remains, and it follows, **in him verily hath the love of God been perfected.** 'If ye continue in My word'—interchangeable with 'My word continuing in you,'—'then are ye verily My disciples' (John viii. 31): the same emphasis on the 'truly' responding to 'the truth is not in him.' But we cannot help feeling that this 'verily'—here alone made his own by St. John—expresses the solemn joy with which the writer approaches a new word and a new thought that will throb throughout the remainder of the Epistle.

Postponing the study of 'love' until we hear that 'love is of God,' we must mark the 'perfected love.' Five times the thought occurs; and, while always the fellowship of love with God is the undertone, there is a distinction. Twice it is of God's love in or to us; once, in the middle, it is obviously the love common to God and us; and in the rest it is no less obviously love perfected in ourselves. What it is here let three considerations show. First, the Divine love in the mission and atoning work of the Son has been exhibited as effecting the forgiveness and sanctification of the soul; but that does not constitute the full knowledge of God in Christ: His love in us attains its perfect operation only when it becomes the full power of a simple and pure obedience to His word; that is its finished work in us. We know God when we know His love; and the knowledge or fellowship of His love is the possession of its perfect influence within us as the active power of holiness in one that has been passively delivered by it from sin. Hence, secondly, it is added, **by this we know that we are in him**: not by spiritual enjoyments; not by ecstatic absorption into the Divine abyss, such as later and degenerate mysticism delighted to describe; but by the power to do His holy will in absolute self-surrender and consecration, do we know that we have union with God. It may be objected that on this view it should read 'that He is in us:' now precisely this we do read when next the perfect operation of the Divine love is referred to: 'God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us' (chap. iv. 12). It is not our consummate love to God that assures us of our union with Him, but the blessed experience of His perfected love in us. Thirdly, this is confirmed by what follows: **He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked.** There is no stress on the 'saith,' as if the meaning were that the profession ought to be confirmed by practice. True as that is, the truth is deeper here. The profession before was, 'I know God;' now the phrase changes, 'that he abideth in Him.' The stress is on the 'abiding,' which now enters the Epistle for the first time to go no more out; and as this continuous fellowship with Christ is no other than the life of the Vine producing fruit in the branches, he who has it is bound to exhibit in himself the holiness of Christ, and walk as He walked. The knowledge, the life, the love of Christ is perfected in this, that we live as He lived. In fact, there are two obligations: being abidingly in Christ absolutely involves a Divine necessity of righteous obedience; and the profession of it binds the professor to do his own part to imitate Him. 'If I then—ye also ought. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done' (John xiii. 14, 15). This suggests the Master's self-sacrificing love as the specific characteristic of His pattern, and leads to the next section. But, before passing on, we should observe the wealth of new terms and thoughts which crowd into the present verse: knowledge, indwelling, abiding; all these being perfected love; and all issuing in our being 'even as He.' Each one of these recurs again and again.

The new commandment, which is also old: that of brotherly love, 7–11.

Ver. 7. **Beloved**—introducing a new view of the subject by a term appropriate,—**no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.** The apostle had spoken of 'commandments' and of the one 'word,' but he had not as yet said 'commandment.' Now, our Lord had associated the latter with brotherly love as a 'new commandment' (John xiii. 34): hence he distinguishes between his Master's 'giving' and his own 'writing.' 'What I now write is not new, as He gave it: for **the old commandment is the word which ye heard** in the ever memorable saying that lived in the Church **from the beginning** of the Christian revelation.'

Ver. 8. **Again**, resuming and as it were correcting, there is a sense in which **a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you**: 'my saying that it is new is a true thing both as it respects Him who "gave" it

and you who read what I "write."' It was new with reference to the old law, which the Saviour fulfilled and consummated and re-enacted in the supreme self-sacrifice rehearsed or anticipated in the feet-washing at the time when He gave it; the law of love was perfected and proclaimed anew, and with an illustration never given to it before. It is new in us, who fulfil it with a new spirit, after a new example, and with new motives, as in short a commandment which is the fulfilment and the fulfiller of all law or word of God. **Because the darkness is passing away, and the True Light now shineth.** When St. John said 'true in Him,' he referred to Christ, whose 'walk' had been spoken of, as also to the Speaker of the new commandment unnamed. He still defines Him without name as the 'True Light:' light as opposed to the darkness of sin, and true, as the reality of which all former revelation was the shadow and precursor. But the Person of Christ is now lost in His manifestation: the perfect revelation of law and of love in their unity is fully come; the darkness of self and sin is only in act of passing.

Ver. 9. It would require a long sentence to supply the unexpanded thought here. In nothing is the newness of the evangelical teaching more evidently seen than in the diametrical opposition it establishes between loving and hating. There is no middle sphere: in the Gospel, love is taught in its purity and perfection as the light of life in the soul, which leaves no part dark, no secret occasion of sin being undiscovered and unremoved; and hate is taught as the synonym of not loving, being the secret germ of all selfishness. Hence **he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness until now,** notwithstanding the light shining around, and notwithstanding his profession, and notwithstanding his possible dwelling among Christians whom he calls brethren.

Vers. 10, 11. Here there is no 'but:' we have a pair of counterparts strictly united. **He that loveth his brother**—his brother being every living man, in this passage as in some others—**abideth in the light.** It is presupposed that he is in it; but for the sake of what follows the abiding is emphasized; as indeed the 'abiding' always follows hard on the 'is:' **and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.** Stumbling-block or offence is sometimes what makes others to fall either intentionally or innocently or inadvertently. But here it is that secret selfishness which takes manifold forms, almost all the forms of sin: the light from Christ entering through the spiritual eye makes the whole spiritual body full of light, and nothing remains undiscovered or unremoved that could cause the fulfiller of this law to fall. It is the high ideal of the 'new commandment;' but one that is here said to be realized in him in whom 'the love of God is perfected' or has its full effect. **But**—now comes in the awful antithesis, containing the whole history of the loveless spirit—**he that hateth his brother**—who does not love his neighbour as himself—**is in the darkness,** and abideth in or **walketh in the darkness**—it is his sphere, and he both receives and diffuses it—**and knoweth not whither he goeth**: 'whither,' because he is in the darkness, and it hath not yet been revealed what the end of that will be, 'how great is that darkness!' 'he goeth,' because the darkness 'hath blinded,' as it were once for all, his eyes to the path on which he is.

Testimony to the reality of their religion; addressed to the church generally, and specially under two aspects.

Vers. 12, 13. **I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.** The apostle, in the act of writing the Epistle, now ceases to distinguish between true and false Christians; he affectionately uses the same appellation which he had used in the first verse when pointing his readers to the intercession and atonement of Jesus Christ; and, taking up again that truth, says that he wrote to them with the confidence that for the sake of His name, on the ground of His finished work on earth and presentation of His Person in heaven, they had the forgiveness of their sins. 'For My name's sake' in the Old Testament becomes now 'for His name's sake;' but it occurs only here, and is parallel with St. Paul's 'God for Christ's sake,' or 'in Christ hath forgiven you.' This confidence is expressed here first simply as the utterance of joyful congratulation.

Continuing the same strain, St. John, to whom all were 'little children,' regards them as divided among themselves into two classes: the more mature, whom he congratulates on that spiritual knowledge of which he had spoken in ver. 3: **I write unto you, fathers, because ye know him that was from the beginning**: 'that which was' in chap. i. 1 becomes here 'Him that was;' that is, the same Jesus through whose name they were all forgiven was, in His Divine Person as the ultimate secret of the virtue of His atonement, fully revealed to them in the faith which they had received and studied and continued to know. This was true concerning all; but it was the special characteristic of the more advanced. The same may be said of the next clause. **I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the evil one.** The head of the kingdom of darkness, alluded to in ver. 8, in whom 'the whole world lieth' (chap. v. 19), elsewhere 'the Prince of this world' (John xii. 31), had been overcome by all the 'little children;' but the struggle in the case of the fathers had issued in the calm certitude of 'the full assurance of understanding' (Col. ii. 2), while in the young men it was a confident but recent victory. Let it be observed, before proceeding, that hitherto the church had been addressed as children by regeneration; in what follows they are rather children by adoption. Hitherto the Divine Son has been pre-eminent: His name, His eternal personality, His opposition to the wicked one. Communion with Him has been chiefly in the apostle's thoughts.

Vers. 13, 14. Here the apostle takes up again the strain which had been suspended, if not actually, yet in thought. The word 'I write' is changed for 'I wrote:' first, because the three great principles dwelt on—redemption from sin and from the world's ruler by knowledge of God—are absolutely fundamental, and must be repeated emphatically; secondly, because the writer sees fit to regard his Epistle as now in the hands of the readers, and 'I wrote what I am now writing' becomes simple enough; thirdly, because he is about to commence two solemn exhortations for which he would doubly prepare them.

I have written unto you, children or **sons of God, because ye know the Father.** 'Sons,' the new designation, corresponds here with 'the

Father.' The Father becomes now pre-eminent, and fellowship with Him through the Son. Forgiveness is connected with regeneration in the Son; as it respects the Father, it is the knowing His fatherly name, and we 'are called the children of God:' in the order of thought this is preceded by the knowledge of the 'name' of the Son. **I write to you, fathers, because ye know him that is from the beginning.** This exact repetition is very impressive. To the mature the apostle has nothing to add, for to know Christ is to have all knowledge; through it the Father is known, on the one hand, and the enemy is overcome, on the other. **I write to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one.** Re-writing what went before, the apostle reminds the young men both of their strength and of the source of it. They were strong or 'valiant in fight' (Heb. xi. 34), having 'waxed' or become such through constant victory; not, however, in their own power, but through 'Him that strengthened' them, who Himself through His word was the indwelling and abiding source of their conquest. 'Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world' (chap. iv. 4): hence it is difficult to decide whether the personal Logos is here meant or His living word, 'the sword of the Spirit:' certainly not one without the other, though the former use of the phrase suggests that the living Gospel is signified here. Note with what emphasis the last clause is repeated. He who has entered into fellowship with the Son has an abiding victory over the enemy, and this conscious experience of triumph over him, not only in particular assaults but over him, the conqueror has only to maintain by 'keeping himself' so that the enemy may approach, but touch him not (chap. v. 18). This is not a promise only, nor an exhortation, but the present reality of the healthy Christian life.

The love of the world: renounced in the Fellowship of the Father. This exhortation is addressed to all, the tone of contrast being now again resumed.

Ver. 15. **Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** Fellowship with God, and walking in darkness, were diametrical opposites in chap. i.; the same is now said of the love of God and fellowship with the world. Here is an exhortation, and the reason for it. The emphasis is in this verse on the 'love,' which only in this passage is used both of God and the world: elsewhere we have 'friendship with the world' (Jas. iv. 4), 'minding earthly things' (Phil. iii. 19); but the strong word love, the giving up of the whole being, mind, and heart, and will, we have only here. That in the nature of things, and by the evangelical law, must be reserved for God alone; two contradictory perfect loves cannot be in the same soul; therefore, he who thus loves the world cannot have the love of the Father. This reason assigned explains the exhortation. The 'world' is interpreted by it, just as mammon is interpreted by the impossibility of double service: 'ye cannot serve God and mammon.' The world is the sphere of the unregenerate life, governed by another god, fallen from God, and consequently swayed by self, which is separation from God. It is not therefore the whole economy of things; which man cannot love, though he may make it his god. It is not for the same reason the earth as the abode of man. It is not the aggregate of mankind, whom we must love as 'God loved the world.' But it is the whole sum of evil which makes up the principle of opposition to the holiness of God, the 'world which lieth in the wicked one.' In distinction from this universal sphere of sin, which has the whole heart of the unconverted, 'the things that are in the world' define the particular directions which alienation from God may take, and the special objects which self may convert into objects of love.

Ver. 16. **For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.** Now, the apostle defines the nature of the world, more particularly in its utter contrariety to the nature of God. The world is a sphere of life; it has a unity, and 'the whole that is in it,' as it is occupied by man, may be distributed into a trinity. First, 'the lust of the flesh:' in its more limited sense, the living to gratify the desires of the fleshly nature; in its deeper meaning, the gratification of the fallen nature generally in opposition to the Spirit, for St. John, like St. Paul, defines 'that which is born of the flesh' as 'flesh.' Then 'the lust of the eyes;' all the manifold desires that are awakened by the eye as their instrument, or that connect the flesh with the outer world. This also has its profounder meaning: the desire of the world's eye rests upon the sum of things phenomenal, or the 'things that are seen;' and its sin is the universal sin of dependence on the creature, and not beholding, rejoicing in, and being satisfied with the Creator and invisible realities. Thirdly, 'the vainglory of life:' life being here the way or means of physical existence, and not the life which is the glory of this Epistle; the vainglory is the pride and pomp that exults in itself, and gives not the glory to God. This trinity is a tri-unity, making up the 'whole' that is in the world of man's estrangement from Divine things. And, with reference to this whole, the apostle says, twice repeating 'is,' that it springs not from God. It is not of that new life which is 'from God;' but is its perfect opposite. It cannot love God, because it is not of His nature; it cannot go to God, because it came not from Him. Whence then came it originally and comes it now? The apostle does not say from sin, nor from Satan. He is thinking and about to speak of its emptiness and transitoriness: he could not therefore say that 'it cometh of evil,' or of sin, or of Satan; for these do not pass away. But he limits his words, 'it is of the world,' the emphasis being on this, that 'it is not of the Father,' the Father of that Son in whom we have eternal love and eternal life.

Ver. 17. **And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.** The world as a system of desires contrary to the Divine will, governed by its one 'lust' that makes it what it is, is even now in the act of passing. Its sinners will remain, and the consequences of its sin; but as a complex 'world of iniquity,' ordered in its

disorder, it will pass away, it is even now passing. Then there is a change to the personal individual, who knows no lust, but only the one will: abjuring the lust of the flesh, he doeth that will which is his sanctification; renouncing the sight of his eyes, he walks before Him who is invisible; and forsaking all glorying in self, he gives glory to God supremely and alone. He shall, like God, and with God, and in God, abide for ever.

The antichrists as errors of the darkness: their mark and character, with the protection against them.

Ver. 18. **Little children**: the address is to all; and with reference to the several characteristics acknowledged in them, their knowledge of the Father and of Him who was from the beginning, and their victory over the evil one. While the knowledge and the victory run through this whole section, it is more immediately linked with the preceding 'passeth away.'

It is the last time. This is St. John's final and only expression for the Christian dispensation as answering to the 'last days' of Isa. ii. 2, the 'end of the days' of Deut. iv. 30, the 'afterward' of all the prophets. When our Lord introduced the 'fulness of time,' another 'afterward' began: in His own teaching, for He spoke of 'this world' and the 'world to come' (Matt. xii. 30); and in that of His apostles. Each of them uses his own phrases for the distinction: St. Paul speaks of 'the present time' and 'the coming glory' (Rom. viii. 18), and St. Peter of 'the last days' or 'the last of the days,' and 'to be revealed in the last time' (1 Pet. i. 20, 5). St. John's is 'the last time' here at the beginning of the section, and at the end of it 'His appearing' (ver. 28), which closes the 'time.' The passing away of the world, and the continuance of the hour or time, run on coincidently: 'when He shall be manifested' will end both. During the old economy, and in the rabbinical interval with its 'the present world' and 'the coming world,' the division of history was the advent of Messiah; now that He has come, the dividing point is His second coming. It is important to remember that the apostle first speaks solemnly of this 'last time' as distinguished from the passing world. Its relation to antichrists comes in afterwards, and gives a new colouring to the thought.

And as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have arisen many antichrists; whereby we perceive that it is the last time. Our Lord had predicted not one 'false Christ,' but 'many,' as coming, not immediately before the end of the world only, but from the time of His departure (Matt. xxiv. 4, 24). And St. John pays homage first and pre-eminently to his Master's word, referring, however, rather to His 'false prophets,' and calling them by a name used only by himself 'antichrists,' not as taking the place of Christ, but as opposing Him. He includes also, of course, the many predictions of his brethren, to the effect that 'false teachers would bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them' (2 Pet. ii. 1). This is the pith of his argument: we discern that we are in the last revelation, because side by side go on the development of truth and error concerning the one Person who is the sum of revelation. But, in his way to this argument, St. John introduces an allusion to what they had heard from St. Paul, interpreting Daniel, concerning one antichrist, whom he mentions only to show that his predecessors are already in the world. As he is not, like St. Paul, referring to the signs of the 'last days' in the 'last time,' but only of the last time generally, he does not dwell on the future personal antichrist. He does, however, set his seal to St. Paul's teaching that a 'man of sin will be revealed,' exalting himself 'above all that is called God,' that is, as St. John interprets it, 'above all that is called Christ' who is God, 'denying the Father and the Son' in a form of opposition which only the fulfilment will explain. Though he does not define his own word more fully, and its explanation must be sought in St. Paul's Epistles and the Apocalypse, he here gives a new name to St. Paul's 'man of sin,' the 'antichrist' or opponent of Christ pre-eminently, and he adds that 'he cometh,' or, in solemn Biblical language, is still 'the coming one,' as opposed to the antichrists who 'have become' such or arisen.

Ver. 19. This verse stands alone, as containing a preliminary encouragement. **They went out from us, but they were not of us.** They literally left us, for they were in our fellowship, and received in the Church the doctrines they perverted; but they had not the life of our doctrine, and were not of us in the sense of that fellowship of which the first chapter had spoken. **For if they had been of us,** in this latter sense, **they would have continued with us,** in the former sense. **But**—the apostle is hurrying from them and hurries them away, in an elliptical sentence, 'this came to pass'—**that they might be made manifest that they are not all of us.** The consequence is a purpose: they have gone according to the fixed purpose of God's Spirit that heresy should be purged out of the Church. It is true that by their going out they show *the* possibility of some being 'with us' who are not 'of us.' But the words, which are not so involved in the original as many think, do not say this. They only declare that such heresy cannot and must not continue in the Christian fellowship,—continue, that is, as maintained by teachers: as members of the fellowship all need the subsequent exhortation to 'abide in Him,' and the warning against being 'ashamed before Him at His coming.' The reason of the necessary rejection of heresy is given in the next verse.

Ver. 20. **And ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.** There is no 'but' here: the verse introduces a new consolation; and that is the fact of the impartation of the Holy Ghost to all the members of the spiritual fellowship, as a Spirit of consecration generally, and particularly as a teaching guide into all truth. 'Ye have,' as the result of having 'received' (ver. 27), your part of the common Pentecostal gift. This was received from the 'Holy One:' that is, Christ, who is 'the life,' or 'the Son' as the source of our sonship, 'the Righteous' as the source of our righteousness, and 'the Holy One' as the source of our sanctification. The term 'unction,' or chrisma, like that of 'seed' or sperma, refers to the Holy Ghost, whose name has not yet been mentioned. It goes back to the Old Testament, which St. John never formally quotes, though he habitually incorporates it: there the 'anointing oil' or 'the oil of anoint-

ing' (Ex. xxix. 7, 21) is the symbol of the Holy Ghost, first as setting apart for God whatever was touched by it, secondly as specifically consecrating the priests and kings and prophets of the old economy. The antitype was poured out on Christ 'without measure' that it might flow upon all His members, consecrating them to God, and making them representatives of His three official relations. In its first meaning, which certainly is included here, it signifies that those who receive the chrism belong to Christ as opposed to all antichrists: this indeed suggesting the word. In its second meaning it signifies that the members of Christ's mystical body share His unction as the Prophet: they have His Spirit teaching them 'all things,' that is, 'all the truth' as 'truth is in Jesus.' The chrisma becomes as it were a charisma: the gift of spiritual knowledge in all that pertains to the doctrine presently made prominent. St. John, as his manner is, lays down the high and sacred privilege in all its perfectness: the qualifications are inserted afterwards, and indeed are suggested in every sentence.

Ver. 21. The promise of the 'Spirit of the truth' is evidently in St. John's thoughts, and these words are in indirect allusion to that promise as fulfilled in the community. The Saviour laid stress on 'the truth' as one: the truth embodied in His own person. That central truth all who receive the anointing must know, and the apostle, with the same feeling that dictated the previous words, 'I have written to you, children, because ye know the Father,' acknowledges their heavenly instruction even while he is instructing them himself.

I write not unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it. His purpose here is to show them that the truth is not only a revelation of the Christ, but a revelation of antichrist also. **And that no lie is of the truth:** he takes it for granted that they know; that is, in the form of taking it for granted, he urgently exhorts them to remember that there can be no peace between the truth and any form of the lie whatever. The same absolute contrast and diametrical opposition that he establishes between regeneration and sin, the Father's love and love of the world, light and darkness, he establishes between truth and error. We often trace theological error to a perversion of lesser truth; and in many lesser matters rightly. But 'the truth' as it is explained in the next verse cannot shade off into less true, and reach the false that way. Hence the abrupt question that follows.

Vers. 22, 23. **Who is the liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?** If every lie comes from another source than the truth, what is that source? Our Saviour said of one: 'He is a liar, and the father of it' (John viii. 44). And this was preceded by, 'Ye are of your father the devil,' who 'abode not in truth.' Hence here we have first the great error viewed in respect to its author, the representative of the central lie: that lie being the denial that the Jesus of the Gospels was or is identical with the Christ. To this formula might be reduced most of the heresies of the age; but especially that of the Jews, and that of Gnosticism which made Christ an Æon who joined the man Jesus for a season. This last was in the apostle's mind, and he thought of the exceeding plausibleness of many arguments adduced in its favour; hence the earnestness with which he changes the abstract lie into the concrete liar, and reminds the anointed Christians that they must remember the fatherhood of every form of error on this subject. Denying the Christ,—**This is the antichrist:** he deserves that name, though his error in this respect is only a branch of the great lie. He deserves it well, for he is really a member of the family **that denieth the Father and the Son.** This last is the essence of antichrist: the sum of all possible error, denying and renouncing conjointly the Godhead and the Revealer of the Godhead. It is the heaviest charge brought against the false teachers in the Epistle, and therefore the apostle solemnly explains and substantiates it.

Whosoever denieth the Son, neither hath he the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also. The liar and the antichrist is now reduced and yet extended to 'whosoever.' The denial that Jesus is the Christ is identified with denying the Son in His eternal relation to the Father, in His incarnation which made Him the Christ, and in His sole supremacy as the revealer of the Godhead. He 'hath not' the Father; for 'no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him' (Matt. xi. 30). He that 'confesseth' the Son, in the creed of his heart and lips and life, 'hath' in loving fellowship 'the Father also' as well as the Son. Such being the great issue at stake, the anointing from the Holy One cannot fail to keep you from error, at least on this vital question.

Vers. 24, 25. **As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye shall also abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he promised us, even life eternal.** The false teachers introduced novelties: their doctrine was opposed to the stedfast message or promise of the Gospel; and the apostle introduces a new element here; that is, the apostolic teaching as the standard to which every form of doctrine, good or evil, must be brought. The unction of the Holy One gives spiritual discernment to every sanctified believer, by which he can perceive the contradiction of error. But the security is deeper even than that. The apostolic doctrine is an indwelling word which is the condition of abiding in the Father and the Son. This abiding in God is the whole substance of the truth as a promise: 'this is the promise which He promised;' and this promise is 'eternal life.'

Vers. 26, 27. The blessedness of 'eternal life' has brought this sad protest against error to an end. But the writer's heart is full, and he introduces a final exhortation and encouragement, in the same tone that has been felt throughout, that of confidence in his readers.

These things have I written unto you concerning them that are seeking to lead you astray: they, rather than the anointed Christians, gave occasion for all he had said. **And as for you, the anointing which ye have received abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you.** There is no side-glance here at the teachers who would intrude; but it is the old truth that the abiding of the interior Teacher in the heart is the supreme source of knowledge: however important the instruction of ministers, even of that which the apostle is himself here giving, may be, it derives all its value from the inward

demonstration of the Spirit. His unction must sanctify reading and hearing and meditation, and all the subordinate means of learning. There is danger, of course, that this may be perverted. Hence the concluding words are very strong; compressing into three clauses, not united with perfect concinnity, all that had been said. **But, as his anointing**—His Spirit who is the truth,—**teacheth you concerning all things**—in all the means He adopts, this letter being among them,—**and is true, and is no lie**—thus again does the apostle glory against the false teachers,—**and even as it taught you, ye abide in him**—thus he rejoices over his people safe from the seducers.

Ver. 28. But throughout this Epistle the human side is never forgotten, while all is referred finally to the indwelling of the Son.

And now, my little children, abide in him: that, when he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed from him at his coming. This ends the whole section which began with the 'last time.' The 'coming' of the Lord is His coming to judgment; but St. John here uses, and here only, a gracious word that signifies His presence, though marking the beginning of that presence by the word that signifies its continuance, 'His coming.' No reference is made to the time of His return, or to the possibility of their living on earth till He should come. We are exhorted to 'abide in Him;' and whether we meet Him or are brought with Him, the confidence will be the same. Its opposition is the 'speechlessness' of the marriage guest, 'ashamed from Him' or His presence.

CHAPTER II. 29–III. 22.

Fellowship in Regeneration.

29 IF ye know that [a] he is righteous, ye know[1] that every one that doeth righteousness [b] is born[2] of him. CHAP. III. 1. Behold, [c] what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called [d] the sons[3] of [e] God![4] [f] therefore the 2 world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, [g] now are we the sons[3] of God; [h] and it doth not yet appear[5] what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear,[6] [i] we shall 3 be like him; [k] for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him[7] [l] purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for 5 [m] sin is the transgression of the law.[8] And ye know that [n] he was manifested to take away our[9] sins; and [o] in him is no sin. 6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth 7 [p] hath not seen him, neither known[10] him. Little children, [q] let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, 8 even as he is righteous. [r] He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, [s] that he might destroy 9 the works of the devil. Whosoever is born[11] of God [t] doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth[12] in him: and he cannot 10 sin, because he is born[11] of God. [u] In this the children of God are manifest, and [v] the children of the devil: whosoever doeth

[a] Ch. iii. 7.
[b] Jo. i. 13; ch. iii. 9, v. 1, 18.
[c] 1 Jo. iii. 16; ch. iv. 10.
[d] Ver. 10.
[e] Jo. xiii. 13.
[f] 1 Jo. xvi. 3.
[g] Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iii. 26.
[h] Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.
[i] Rom. viii. 29; 2 Cor. iii. 18.
[k] Jo. xvii. 24; Rev. xxii. 4.
[l] 2 Cor. vii. 1.
[m] Rom. iv. 15; ch. v. 17.
[n] Heb. ix. 26; Jo. i. 29; Isa. liii. 11, 12.
[o] 1 Pet. ii. 22.
[p] 3 Jo. 11; ch. ii. 3.
[q] Mat. xxiv. 4; ch. ii. 26.
[r] Ver. 10; Mat. xiii. 38.
[s] Heb. ii. 14; Gen. iii. 15; Lu. x. 18; Jo. xii. 31.
[t] Jo. i. 13; ch. iii. 9, iv. 7, v. 1, 4, 18.
[u] Ver. 2.
[v] Ver. 8.

[1] perceive [2] begotten [3] children [4] *insert* and *such* we are
[5] it is not yet made manifest [6] if he shall be manifested
[7] And every one that hath this hope *set* on him
[8] Every one that committeth sin committeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.
[9] *omit* our [10] knoweth [11] begotten [12] abideth

not righteousness is not of God, [w] neither he that loveth not his brother.

11 For this is [x] the message that ye heard [y] from the beginning,
12 that [z] we should love one another. Not as [a] Cain, *who* was of that [b] wicked one,[13] and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? [c] because his own works were evil, and his brother's
13 righteous. [d] Marvel not, my[14] brethren, [e] if the world hate you.
14 [f] We know [g] that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother[15] abideth
15 in death. [h] Whosoever hateth his brother is a [i] murderer: and ye know that [k] no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.
16 Hereby perceive we the love *of God*,[16] [l] because he laid down his life for us: and [m] we ought to lay down *our* lives for the
17 brethren. But [n] whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need,[17] and [o] shutteth up his bowels *of compassion*[18]
18 from him, [p] how dwelleth[19] the love of God in him? My little children, [q] let us not love in word, neither in[20] tongue; [r] but in deed, and in[21] truth.
19 And hereby we know[22] that we are of the truth, and shall
20 assure our hearts before him. For if our heart[23] condemn us,[24]
21 God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, [s] if our heart condemn us not, *then* [t] have we confidence[25] toward
22 God. And [u] whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because [v] we keep his commandments, and [w] do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

[w] Ch. iv. 8.
[x] Ch. i. 5.
[y] Ch. ii. 24.
[z] Ver. 23; ch. iv. 7.
[a] Jude 11.
[b] Mat. xiii. 38.
[c] Ps. xxxviii. 20.
[d] Jo. iii. 7.
[e] Jo. xv. 18.
[f] Ver. 2.
[g] Jo. v. 24.
[h] Mat. v. 21, 22.
[i] Jo viii. 44.
[k] Gal. v. 20, 21.
[l] Jo. xv. 13.
[m] Phil. ii. 17; 1 Thes. ii. 8.
[n] Jas. xi. 15, 16.
[o] Deut. xv. 7.
[p] Ch. iv. 20.
[q] Ezek. xxxiii 31.
[r] 2 Jo. 1; 3 Jo. 1.
[s] 1 Cor. iv. 4.
[t] Ch. v. 14; Mat. vii. 7.
[u] Ch. v. 14; Mat. vii. 7.
[v] Ch. ii. 3.
[w] Jo. viii. 29.

[13] the evil one [14] *omit* my [15] *omit* his brother
[16] hereby know we love [17] beholdeth his brother in need
[18] his heart *or* compassion [19] abideth [20] with the [21] *omit* in
[22] Hereby shall we know [23] before him, whereinsoever our heart
[24] *insert* because [25] boldness

CONTENTS. The apostle now introduces a new order of thought, governed by the idea of regeneration as the gift of life in Christ to individual man. He first (down to chap. iii. 3) dilates on its glory as a birth of God; as the design of His love; as including both the privileges and the reality of sonship; as awaiting its full dignity at the revelation of Christ; and as inspiring through hope the energy of personal sanctification. Then (to ver. 10) he dwells on the absolute incompatibility between the regenerate life and sin: as the destruction of sin is the object of Christ's atoning manifestation; as sin is inconsistent with abiding in Him; and as sin is the mark of communion with the devil. By an easy transition he passes to the essential connection between regeneration and brotherly love (down to ver. 18): showing that the great message to the regenerate was the injunction to love one another; that this involves the abiding difference between the righteous and the unrighteous, between the world and believers, as proved from Cain downwards; that brotherly love is the mark of regeneration; and, finally, that our love to each other has one supreme standard, the sacrifice of Christ for us. The apostle winds up the subject (to ver. 22) by showing the practical issue of obedience to this commandment in the confidence which it inspires towards God as the Judge of our hearts and the Hearer of our prayer.

The glory and dignity of regeneration and adoption, both here and hereafter.

Ver. 29. **If ye know that he is righteous, ye perceive that every one also who doeth righteousness is begotten of him.** This sentence is strictly transitional, and therefore of necessity may be interpreted with reference as well to what precedes as to what follows. Connected with the words immediately going before, the pronouns must refer to Christ, from whose righteous nature the regenerate receives his life, his righteous conduct declaring the fact of his new birth. Perhaps it is better to connect them with the whole of the preceding context. 'If, after all that has been said, ye know that God is righteous with whom ye have fellowship, then mark the inference that ye who abide in Him, and are righteous also, must be begotten of Him. You cannot abide IN

Him but as ye are born OF Him.' What this new aspect of life in Christ means, the apostle proceeds to show. This verse looks forward to all that follows: it is in some sense the superscription of the remainder of the Epistle, but especially of the chapter we now approach. It may seem remarkable that St. John does not begin a new section with a special address to the 'little children;' but that address has been heard just before, and will be presently repeated. Again, it may appear strange that he should pass from God to Christ and from Christ to God with no mark of the change, using the same personal pronoun throughout. But we must remember that the apostle regards the Father and the Son as one: especially here so soon after the words, 'He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.' There would indeed be no impropriety in referring both pronouns to Christ: He is the Righteous, and the regenerate may be said to be 'begotten of Him,' just as He Himself spoke of their being 'begotten of water and of the Spirit.' But the begetting, which is the word used by St. John alone for the infusion of a new life into the soul, is commonly referred to the Father or to God. Lastly, though the 'doing of righteousness' leads off the sentence, the emphasis is not on it, but on the 'begotten of Him.' We shall see in the next chapter that the new birth must be approved in righteous conduct; here the order is inverted, and practical righteousness infers and points to the new birth.

CHAP. III. 1. **Behold!** as an exclamation, and thus standing alone, occurs only here. It is the tranquil expression of adoring wonder. **What manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us:** this expression also is peculiar. It is the kind of love that is meant, not its greatness, nor its unmerited goodness. The gift of love, nowhere else said to be given, should not be limited in meaning to demonstration or proof or token: it is love itself which is made ours; and as this gift is hereafter bound up with the mission of the Son, being indeed jealously restrained to the atonement as its channel, we must needs think here of that, though unexpressed. 'Herein is love.'

That we should be called children of God; and such we are. 'God' indeed 'so loved the world,' 'in order that whosoever believeth should not perish, but have everlasting life.' But that purpose of mercy to the world is actually reached in believers; and the design ('that' means 'in order that') in their case can hardly be distinguished from the result. Still, the design is uppermost; and the apostle would have chosen another form of expression if he had meant only the great love shown in our being called sons. Observe, however, that 'sons' is not used, but 'children;' St. Paul uses the former in the same connection, but St. John limits it to One. Note also the manifest distinction between the 'being called' and the 'being' children: good authorities support the addition to the text of 'such we are,' the change of tense simply marking the emphasis of the distinction. Although in the Hebrew idiom 'to be called' and 'to be' mean one and the same thing, a careful examination will show that there is a slight shade of difference. Even in the supreme instance, 'He shall be called the Son of God,' the Incarnate who 'is' eternally the Son is 'called' such with special reference to His relation to us. St. Paul expresses the distinction as adoption and renewal: the latter signifying the restoration of the Divine image, the former its accompanying privileges of liberty and inheritance. St. John himself illustrates his own meaning in the Gospel: 'To them gave He privilege to become the children of God, who were born not of blood but of God.' But the one cannot exist without the other. The two unite in the Christian sonship, an estate which has a glorious expansion and development in time and in eternity: the development of regeneration being into the perfect image of the Saviour's holiness, that of adoption being into the full enjoyment of the eternal inheritance. To this the apostle now proceeds; but, before doing so, he adds a reflection in harmony with his meditative style. **For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.** So far as this is a parenthesis, it is easily explained. The apostle's mind is still occupied with the unanointed world of the last chapter, and he is about to return to it almost immediately: hence the echo of the past and the anticipation of the future. But it is not strictly a parenthesis. It is the writer's manner to think and write in contrasts: known of God, we are unknown to the world. 'For this cause' gives the more general reason: because our new birth is a mystery of Divine gift and grace, the world, not having this gift, understands it not. 'The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit;' and this secret of regeneration is beyond the search of the unregenerate faculty: life alone understands life. The second 'because' gives a profounder reason for the former reason itself. 'It knew Him not' points to the world's rejection of the Father manifested in His Son as one great act of wilful ignorance at the time of the incarnation, which is still continued. The world's ignorance of God has assumed a new character. 'O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee,' the Lord said on the eve of His final rejection. He added, 'But these have known that Thou didst send Me.' And again He said, 'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.' The ground of the world's negative inability to understand the children of God and positive hatred of them is its rejection of their Lord.

Ver. 2. **Beloved, now are we children of God.** This new address is appropriate to the sharers in common of the love of God. The affirmation that follows, repeating the solemn 'children of God,' is most emphatic: 'we possess this sacred privilege, though the world acknowledge us not; nor look we for anything higher; there can be no greater title in earth or heaven.' But it must be remembered that the apostle has just spoken of the coming of our Lord, and of our abiding spiritually in Him till then, lest we be ashamed to see His countenance. As He had this in His mind in writing, we must not forget it in our exposition of what follows.

And it hath not yet been manifested what we shall be: we know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him, since we shall see him even as he is. There is no contrast between the now and the then: the thought naturally passes onward 'to see the end.' Yet there is no aid from experience: 'it hath not been manifested;' that is, what kind of inheritance awaits us has never yet been seen, nor will it be seen until He appear. 'But'—though there is no 'but' in the terse sentence—'we know by certain inference what we know not by actual fact, that,

when He appears, our highest hope will be satisfied in our perfect conformity, in body and soul and spirit, to His image. This we know; for we have the promise of His prayer that we shall be with Him where He is and behold His glory. Since we shall see Him as He is, which is our utmost happiness, we must needs be perfectly like Him, which is our utmost blessedness.' Although, as has been said, St. John does not carefully distinguish between the Father and the Son who reveals Him, we must suppose the vision of Jesus to be here meant. God 'dwelleth in light unapproachable;' Him 'no man hath seen, nor can see.' Hence the beatific vision of God 'face to face' refers to 'the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Of the eternal City it is said: 'The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Lamp thereof.' Note that the emphasis does not rest upon the 'seeing,' but upon the 'being like.' Further, that the final glorification into the image of Christ is never said to be the result of seeing it; but, conversely, likeness to Him, the prerogative of the resurrection, is the preparation for seeing. The transformation which follows from 'reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord' has to do with the sanctification of this life; and will be found in the next verse. Lastly, the likeness here spoken of is left indefinite: it is not equality, it is not identification, it is not absorption. It is not the same word which is used concerning the 'sons of the resurrection' who shall be 'equal to the angels;' it is not the same word which is used concerning Christ's equality with the Father; but it is the same that is used of His taking the 'likeness of man.' And this most profoundly touches its meaning here. He as a servant was 'like as we ARE,' but He is now glorified. We shall be hereafter 'like Him as He IS.' Meditation and faith and hope must fill up the thought.

Ver. 3. **And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.** That the 'calling' and the 'being,' the privilege and the reality, may be hereafter eternally one and indistinguishable, the children of God must in this life become like the Son in His purity: the Divine gift will be consummated as a gift when the Son is revealed; but it is consummated in this world not without human co-operation. Here alone St. John calls in the energy of Christian hope: its object is the appearing of Christ, it is 'set on Him;' within the soul it is an incentive: the faith which worketh by love worketh by hope also. The meaning of the word 'purifieth himself' will best be understood by collating it with 'doeth righteousness:' the latter is a complete conformity with the requirements of law, the former is the deliverance from all interior sin; the latter is our finished justification, the former is our entire sanctification. Christ is the standard of both: 'even as He is righteous,' 'even as He is pure.' Neither the one nor the other connotes the idea that He became what He is. 'He IS pure,' and that is the same as saying that the Divine holiness is essentially in Him. 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' That He is called 'pure' and not 'holy' has two reasons. First, it springs from the idea of our 'purifying ourselves.' Secondly, it is more limited than 'holy,' and refers to His human nature as free from the stain that all other human nature has. It is never used of God, but is strictly appropriate to God incarnate. Then our purifying ourselves has reference to the gradual attainment of that entire deliverance from the stain of sin—not unchastity or any specific form of it—which is represented in the first chapter as the effect of Christ's blood. The word there used St. Paul adopts to express our own evil: 'Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement.' St. John keeps that for the Divine work, and uses a term which St. Peter and St. James agree with him in adopting for the human act: 'Seeing ye have purified your souls' (1 Pet. i. 22); 'Purify your hearts, ye double-minded' (Jas. iv. 8).

Regeneration and sinning incompatible: first considered with reference to our union with Christ as manifested to take away sin, and our true knowledge of Him; and then secondly with reference to the utter abolition of our fellowship with the Devil.

In the former part of the section the thought of the Son of God predominates; in the latter, the thought of the author of evil. The same truth is then referred to the indwelling of the Spirit. And the whole is closed by a summary assertion of the contrariety between the children of God and the children of the devil.

Ver. 4. **Every one that doeth sin transgresseth also the law: and sin is transgression of law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away sins: and in him is no sin.** The apostle reverts to the proposition that began this second part, that the regenerate as born of God doeth righteousness because God is righteous. In the interval he has dilated on the privileges, present and future, of the state of sonship; ending with the sanctifying effect of the hope of being like Christ at His manifestation in glory. Now, he comes back to the first manifestation of Christ, the effect of which was to render righteousness possible by His atonement and obligatory by His example. But righteousness is something different from purification: to be righteous as He is righteous is more than being pure even as He is pure. Righteousness is that 'keeping of His commandments' (chap. ii. 4) and 'doing His will' (chap. ii. 17) which had been spoken of before. To be pure from sin is to be cleansed from its indwelling; to be righteous is to be conformed to the requirements of law: it is the opposite of 'lawlessness' here, which contradicts express ordinance, and of 'unrighteousness' in chap. v. 17, which is the absence of the internal principle of right. Collating these passages, we learn that sin and violation of law (for 'lawlessness' does not express the full idea) and the principle of wrong within are synonymous and co-extensive terms. Now in the phraseology of Scripture, 'the Lamb of God beareth away the sin of the world' (John i. 29), 'was manifested to put away or annul sin' (Heb. ix. 26). St. John refers to the Baptist's word, and the testimony of all the witnesses, as well known: 'Behold,' said the forerunner; and the exclamation pointed to that Son of God, the Only-begotten who was in the bosom of the Father and was manifested 'to take away'—not to bear it by imputation, though that is implied—sin as unrighteousness: to abolish in His people the very principle of opposition to law and deviation from right. For this is the real connection between the two verses. We shall see presently that St. John has the Antinomian in view, who asserted that the abolition of sin meant the abolition of law. Here,

however, he only declares that the design of the Saviour's manifestation was to take away not law, but transgression of law. The manifestation includes the whole process of Christ upon earth. 'In Him is no sin,' of unrighteousness as defined above, which would have prevented His offering from being that of perfect obedience: this, however, is an undertone supplied by the Epistle to the Romans; St. John's sublime view of the atoning work does not linger upon any vindication of its perfection.

Vers. 5, 6, 7. **And in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him. My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.** Here first enters the apostle's high testimony to the sinlessness of the estate of fellowship with Christ: a testimony which recurs again and again, and is finally made one of the three summary points of the whole Epistle. Interpretations of his testimony differ according to the doctrinal views of those who offer them: their classification is needless here, as each will appear in its place. Suffice it to say that St. John in every case explains his own meaning in the context; and we shall find that the leading methods of exposition have each its measure of truth when itself is rightly expounded. In this passage the keynote is the danger of being led astray. St. John addresses his readers by the affectionate term which bespeaks the solemnity of the subject, and warns them against a deception which he regards as even in their case possible. The deceiver is no other than the worker of iniquity who thinks himself released from law, and would and might induce them to follow him. To say 'that we have no sin' is in chap. i. 8 self-deception; to say that we may know Christ and 'continue in sin' (using St. Paul's phrase) is, after being saved, to be deceived by another: in the former case the Christian life has not begun, in the latter it is endangered from without. The deception looks back to the negative assertion of ver. 6, and forward to the positive assertion of ver. 7, and might have occupied its own verse between them. With regard to the former, the whole argument is in that grand negation: 'in Him there is no sin,' the 'is' is the eternal present of that Son of God 'whose glory is that of the Only-begotten, full of grace and truth.' The deceiver might not challenge that: although both in ancient and in modern times a certain germ of unrighteousness has been supposed to have been taken with our fallen nature which the Redeemer expelled from Himself; or it has been deemed necessary to maintain at least the possibility of sinning in the tempted Saviour. We may be sure that neither of these notions ever beclouded the apostle's apprehension of his Lord, the Son of God manifested in flesh. 'Whosoever abideth in' this sinless Being himself sinneth not: 'out of His fulness he receives grace upon grace,' in continuous and sufficient measure to keep him from sin: the abiding is the condition, and it is the explanation of this wonderful word. This is admitted by many, who speak of it as the ideal state of a man in Christ: an ideal it is, just as it is an ideal in Christ; but no more. The word is inappropriate, however true in itself, if it is regarded as distinguished from the realization. The converse follows, as usual with changed terms: 'he that sinneth,' as the characteristic of his life, and sinneth while professing to believe in Jesus, 'hath not seen Him,' never saw Him nor sees Him now, with that spiritual eye that 'beholds the glory of the Only-begotten, full of grace and truth,'—for it seems evident that St. John is thinking of his own Prologue; nor indeed has ever come to any saving knowledge of Him whatever. So far from abiding in Him, he has never had any spiritual fellowship with Him: the order with St. John is to know, to see, and to abide in the Son of God, who is eternal life. With regard to the latter deception, St. John adopts the positive tone, though a negation is implied: declaring what had been the issue in his mind from the beginning of this section, that the righteousness of Christ is through regeneration imputed to the believer. What then was the delusion to which they were exposed? That, evidently, of supposing that a man might be in a state of righteousness, accepted as 'righteous,' without doing the works of righteousness. Here then the apostle identifies the works of righteousness and the character of righteousness; still in such a way as to make the deeds evidence of the state. He whose practice, inward and outward, in thought and word and spirit, is conformed to the law, and only he, is in the sight of God righteous. There is some difficulty in the final words 'as He is righteous.' We cannot suppose that they are intended to obviate perversion of the Pauline doctrine of our 'being made the righteousness of God in Him,' as if the meaning were that we are as well as are accounted righteous in Jesus, that is, through seeing Him and knowing Him and abiding in Him. The simplest view is that Christ is the standard, as of our holiness and of our filial dignity, so also of our righteousness. 'Even as He is' refers to all the three, and in the most marked manner. How far we may conform to that standard is a question that must be answered with caution: 'as He is' does not refer to a participation in the Lord's perfect righteousness in the most absolute sense; but, on the other hand, the righteousness as a principle of universal obedience to the law is by the whole strain of the present argument supposed to be reflected in us. As our regenerate life is His life in us, so our purification is to be as He is pure, and our righteousness as He is righteous.

Vers. 8, 9. **He that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.** This passage is, taken altogether, unparalleled in Scripture: as deep in its mystery as it is clear in its expression. As the doing of righteousness was in chap. ii. 29 made the proof of a birth from God, so now the doing of sin, as the characteristic of the life, is made the evidence of an origination, though not a birth, from Satan. St. John here, as almost everywhere, reproduces the teaching of Christ in his own Gospel: 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do' (John viii. 44); where the same 'of' is used. The following 'begotten of God' renders it needless that he should mark the difference between the relation of the regenerate to God and the relation of sinners to the wicked one. Moreover, that difference is more than hinted at in the words ensuing, 'The devil sinneth from the beginning,' which means that all sin had its origin in him, and that, as sin began with him, and came among

men through his temptation, all who commit sin may be said to depend upon him and belong to his family, adopted into it, as it were, though not born again or from below. Wherever there is sin St. John regards it as a work of the devil, using human instruments: 'He sinneth always and everywhere.' The relation to sin, and sin in its relation to him, 'the Son of God'—thus solemnly introduced as the antagonist of Satan—was manifested 'to destroy,' that is, to dissolve or do away or break up as an organized fabric or organizing principle. He came not 'to destroy' the law of righteousness, but to fulfil it; He came to destroy the 'law of sin,' the Satanic law. The accomplishment of both designs runs on in parallel lines: the former is accomplished in him that doeth righteousness; the latter in him who ceases 'to do sin.' Nothing can be more express than the recognition of the personality of the devil; and nothing can be plainer than that the destruction of his works is strictly limited to the abolition of his power over man through the redemption of the cross, and of his power in man through the Spirit of regeneration. St. John keeps the words of Christ in view in every word he here writes. For the rest, he altogether abstains from allusion to the mystery of the origin of evil in Satan, as also from allusion to the final issues in relation to him: his organized works, as a system of anti-righteousness, shall be dissolved—for Christ cannot have appeared in vain—and that is all that is said. In fact, this dark subject is introduced solely to impress the fact that they who are Christ's are by that very fact removed from the sphere and the system of sin.

Ver. 9. **Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin; because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God.** This third view of the contrariety between sin and the estate of regeneration somewhat changes the ground. The Divine Spirit comes in, here called the seed or principle of the Divine life in the soul. He has not been mentioned as yet in the Epistle; but in the second chapter He was the chrisma or unction upon believers; now, by analogy, He is the sperma or seed within them. The abiding of 'the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' within the spirit is perpetual freedom from 'the law of sin and death' (Rom. viii. 3). This central word looks back to the former clause and forward to the latter. He who has in him the indwelling Spirit, 'doeth not sin:' he abhors the remainder of it in his nature, he has renounced the works of Satan, he maintains his fellowship with Christ, and his life is governed by righteousness. He may grieve the Spirit, and may fall into sin, as the apostle himself says in chap. ii. 1; but living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit, this he will not do: 'he sinneth not,' and abstinence from the act of sin is his mark and his privilege. When it is added that 'he cannot sin,' we are to understand the word 'cannot' as referring to the moral impossibility of a regenerate soul violating the principle or, as it were, instinct of his new life. The child of God can sin; but the act of sinning, so far as he is concerned, suspends his life; and, as we are told in chap. v. 16, life must be given to him again when he sins not unto death. The three usual methods of relieving the difficulty of the passage have a certain measure of truth in them as applied to the three clauses of this verse. The first certainly gives the Christian ideal, that a regenerate soul 'sinneth not:' this, however, is the normal Christian state of one who lives in the Spirit, a realized ideal. The second allows us to say that the regenerate as regenerate sins not, though he may suffer sin: the possible antinomian abuse of this truth does not invalidate it. The only sin St. John considers possible to a pure Christian is the act which he mourns over as soon as committed, which he carries to his Advocate with the Father, and which, being forgiven and washed away, is not followed by the withdrawal of the living Seed, who still preserves in him his better self. The third lays them upon the perfect tenses, 'He that has been and still is in a confirmed regenerate state cannot sin.' Undoubtedly an abiding and consummated regeneration tends to make sin more and more impossible; St. John's perfect regeneration, however, is not such as improving on or perfecting itself, but as the true Divine life of the Son consummating the preliminary spiritual movements that lead to it.

Ver. 10. **In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.** Three things are observable here. First, this conclusion of the whole matter shows that the apostle's predominant aim has been to establish clearly the signs and tokens by which the world may be distinguished from the church. The 'manifest' is not to the eye of God alone, though to His supremely and infallibly, but to all who have eyes to see. The 'doing sin' and the 'doing righteousness' are the works of the 'children of God' by regeneration, and 'the children of the devil' by imitation. St. John knows no third class; and the fact that he speaks of the broad characters that stamp the two must throw its influence back upon the interpretation of all that precedes. Secondly, he makes it plain that his chief polemic is against the spurious Christians who strove to reconcile knowledge of Christ with relaxed morality. And, thirdly, he introduces at the close the idea of 'brotherly love,' not as strictly synonymous with righteousness, but yet as in a certain sense the pith and compendium of it. This point is now taken up in what follows.

The relation of regeneration to brotherly love.

Ver. 11. **For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.** There is deep emphasis on the word 'message,' which seems here, as in the first utterance concerning the God of light, to introduce a fundamental truth; and it will be observed that this message is in what follows dwelt upon in its contrasts and deductions just as that early message was: it is like a second and a new great announcement. The 'commandment' of chap. ii. 7 is as it were carried higher: it is the fundamental principle of religion 'from the beginning' delivered in successive proclamations. 'That we should love' must have its force: this has been the design of all.

Ver. 12. **Not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous.** The construction of the first clause should not be mended by any additional words. Cain and Abel were the first historical examples of the difference between regenerate love and unregenerate hate. But the opposite to love is alone here exhibited. The first reason that he

slew his brother is that he was 'of the evil one:' he was not 'of God.' The second is the former in another form: as righteousness is the fruit and test of the new birth, Cain's evil deeds may be said to have been the reason of his murderous violence. Thirdly, in this condensed sentence is included the thought that the righteousness of the children of God evokes for ever the hatred of the unrighteous. The devil is here 'the evil one,' because of the 'evil works' following; and it must be noted that St. John here gives his authoritative interpretation of the Old Testament both as to the devil's relation to Cain and the reason of Cain's hatred.

Vers. 13, 14, 15. Cain becomes 'the world,' and Abel 'you;' the emphasis resting on these two words.

Ver. 14. There is no exhortation in this. Faithful to the thought of the great message, the apostle says: **We know that we have passed out of death into life.** Here the transition is regarded as perfect; and the evidence to ourselves is,—**because we love the brethren.** Not, 'We are now in the life because we love;' but, 'Because we love we know.' Love is not the cause, but the fruit and evidence of regeneration. **He that loveth not abideth in death**: the love is here general. But in the next verse it is made specific in two ways: first, it is **whosoever hateth his brother**—not to love is to hate; and, secondly, he who hateth **is a murderer**—with allusion to Cain, and to one behind Cain who 'was a murderer from the beginning.' The remainder of the verse must be regarded as an appeal to the Christian or human instinct: **Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.** The abiding is simply an echo of the former: it says nothing about his having had it and lost it, or as to his not retaining it hereafter; but is quite general, as when our Lord said, 'Ye have not My word abiding in you.' The argument is an apostrophe: 'No man who would destroy life can have life in himself.' Mark, finally, that the last words declare 'eternal life' to be the true Divine life of regeneration or fellowship with God, not life as mere continuance in being. There would be no meaning in 'hath not abiding life abiding in him.'

Vers. 16, 17, 18. Nothing in the whole Epistle is more impressive or more affecting than the point of juncture in the following words. Against the hate and the murder is set the supreme example of self-sacrificing love. But behind this there is the transition from the principle that the life of sonship must be a life of charity to the thought of that love which gave us the life in the gift of the Son. We may here resume the words, 'Behold, what manner of love!' Here we have the standard of the charity which we must set before us as our aim.

Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us. Not 'the love of God' or 'of the Father' as yet, though that will come; but love in its eternal essence and solitary manifestation, as the last expression and first source of all charity. 'Because He'—there is only One to be thought of here—'sacrificed His life for our advantage:' this expression, occurring only in St. John, is chosen out of many that might have been used in order to combine His pattern in men with our imitation. 'Which thing is true in Him and in us.' **And we ought** refers not merely to our duty of imitation, but to the obligation resulting from the fellowship of the love common to Him and to His people. The essence of love is the impartation of self to others; towards those who need it, it is self-sacrifice: in Christ there was the laying down or pledging His soul as an expiatory sacrifice or ransom price; but these last ideas are not expressed here, because the apostle is hastening to our imitation, which must simply be the 'having laid down our individual lives' in will and intention for the brethren, the consummate act of self-devotion being left to the will of God.

Then follow two clauses, one of contrast, the other of exhortation. '**How abideth the love of God**, thus shown in Christ, as a proof of regeneration in him who, **having the world's sustenance of life, shutteth his heart against his brother's need**—which he beholds sensibly appealing to him?' The strength of the terms must not be overlooked. So far from giving himself, he will not give his mere earthly goods; and he closes his heart instead of opening it for the sacrifice of life. This betokens the utter absence of the ideal life. But the exhortation is a warning to those who have it. **Let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and truth**:—Christ loved in both, and so must we love. But more than that: the word may be a sound theory, uttered only in idle language, without reality; therefore 'let us not love in tongue only, but in truth.'

The privilege of confidence.

Vers. 19–22. **Hereby**: this looks back, taking up the word 'truth,' according to the well-known habit of the writer in beginning a new theme. But he deepens the meaning of the word: as everywhere, the particle 'of' points to a source, the streams of which flow into the soul. The truth is the life of God viewed as a perfect revelation: 'the truth in us' and 'we are of the truth' are counterparts. **Shall we know** keeps up the running thought of the chapter, the personal evidence of regeneration, but with reference to a future contingency referred to in the next verse. **And shall assure our heart**: shall persuade our doubting heart to give up its doubt, or our accusing heart to appeal to God against its own accusation. **Before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us.** 'Before Him' is not in His future judgment, but in His sight before whose awful presence the Christian always lives, the supreme Lord whose vicegerent conscience is in the soul. The 'heart' as here used is the 'conscience' of St. Paul and St. Peter; but with this difference, that they use a word which makes prominent the knowledge in the moral consciousness (which is conscience), while St. John emphasizes the feeling or the pang of that knowledge. 'Whereinsoever:' a careful consideration (the detail of which cannot here be entered into) will lead to the conclusion that this is the right reading of the word translated 'For if' in our Version; and that there is no stop before it, but that 'we shall assure' runs on to the next verse.

Three things must be remembered before we proceed: first, that the word is 'accuse' and not 'condemn,' for there is an appeal to a higher court; secondly, that the accusation, while more or less limited to defects in brotherly love, has a universal reference, as the last words of ver. 22 show; and, thirdly, that the whole tone of the passage is consolatory from beginning to end. **Because God is greater than our heart**: this is

a most affecting, and unique, expression of the blessed truth that God in the evangelical economy as the Controller of conscience: it is He who really 'persuades' it, though St. John, as his manner is, gives to man's faith the office of God's mercy. **And knoweth all things.** 'And' has an obvious force: He who searcheth the heart knoweth what is the deep, hidden, inextinguishable mind of the heart. St. John heard long before an anticipatory commentary on his own words: 'Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.' Our little heart has some measure of compassion for the suffering brother; His greater heart will not fail to have compassion on us in our sincerity. It is as if the words were chosen to signify this: 'condemn' is 'to know AGAINST myself;' God may be said 'to know FOR us.' Finally, God knoweth His own Gospel of atonement, the mystery of which is that the righteous charge of conscience is righteously silenced. But this passes from pure exposition to the function of the theologian and the preacher.

Ver. 21. **Beloved**: this appeal does not mark a change in the persons spoken of; it is St. John's way of introducing a matter of deep experimental importance. He is approaching the inmost sanctuary of religious privilege. **If our heart condemn us not**: the alternative case is now marked, and it is supposed that, like St. Paul, we 'know nothing against ourselves;' but St. John never introduces an antithesis without somewhat enlarging his meaning; and here the 'not accusing' includes the 'assuring our hearts' as its ground, not without an anticipation of the faith in Jesus Christ, and the testimony of the Spirit in ver. 23. It is essential to remember this.

We have boldness toward God. Four times we find this word, which is the outward expression of St. Paul's 'full assurance:' twice in a more general sense as the confidence of hope as to the day of judgment; twice with its more exact meaning of 'free speech' in relation to prayer. Here the apostle passes from the negative soothing of the conscience to the positive and higher privilege which the children of God, approving their regeneration by works, have in approaching God. Their confident speech in prayer is, however, omitted: the confidence is marked by the result of it. **Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.** In the whole Epistle prayer is mentioned only twice. It is the privilege of sonship; and, passing over everything intermediate (though 'if we confess our sins' underlies all), St. John in both cases leaps to the conclusion which our Lord teaches: 'All things, believing, ye shall receive.' We receive in asking, the present asking is the present receiving: this IS the confidence, of which more hereafter. **Because we keep his commandments** in the spirit of filial obedience, and **do the things which are pleasing in his sight** in the spirit of filial zeal. This is a unique combination: the latter clause is also unique, though it is an echo of the Lord's words, 'do always the things that please Him.' In the light of these it is evident that the heart's 'not condemning' may have as its positive side such a testimony of the Father's complacency as makes prayer very bold. Thus we have a very high testimony to the possible character of the communion of the soul with God. But we must remember the 'working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight' (Heb. xiii. 21). The next verse, beginning a new section, will show that this high obedience includes faith in the Lord Jesus, and therefore is not itself the meritorious ground of our acceptance as petitioners. The same is taught by the mystical union that follows, Christ abiding in us, and we in Him: 'Apart from Me ye can do nothing.' But, after all, St. John teaches that the Hearer of prayer has a special complacency in His children's reverent obedience and endeavour to please Him. Wrought in Christ, our works are rewarded by His approval: we give our Lord what He is pleased to seek, and He gives us what we ask.

CHAPTER III. 23–V. 17.

Fellowship in Faith.

23 [a] AND this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another,
24 [b] as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments [c] dwelleth [1] in him, [d] and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, [e] by the Spirit which he hath given us.[2]

CHAP. IV. 1. Beloved, [f] believe not every spirit, but [g] try [3] the spirits whether they are of God: because [h] many false prophets
2 are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: [i] every spirit that confesseth that [k] Jesus Christ is come
3 in the flesh is of God: [l] And every spirit that confesseth not

[a] Jo. vi. 29.
[b] Ch. ii. 8.
[c] Jo. vi. 56; ch. ii. 27, iv. 12, 13.
[d] Jo. xiv. 20, xvii. 21.
[e] Ch. iv. 13; Rom. viii. 9; 1 Thes. iv. 8.
[f] Jer. xxix. 8
[g] 1 Thes. v. 21; Rev. ii. 2.
[h] Ch. ii. 18; Mat. vii. 15; 2 Jo. 7.
[i] 1 Cor. xii. 3.
[k] 2 Jo. 7; Jo. i. 14.
[l] Ch. ii. 22.

[1] abideth [2] gave us [3] prove

that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God:[4] and this
is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should
4 come;[5] [m] and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of
God, little children, and [n] have overcome them; [o] because
5 greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. [p] They
are of the world; therefore [q] speak they of the world, and [r] the
6 world heareth them. We are of God: [s] he that knoweth God
heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby
know we the [t] spirit of truth, and [u] the spirit of error.
7 Beloved, [v] let us love one another: for love is of God; and
every one that loveth is [w] born[6] of God, and knoweth God.
8 He that [x] loveth not knoweth not God; for [y] God is love.
9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us,[7] because
[z] that God sent[8] his only-begotten Son into the world, that we
10 might live through him. Herein is love, [a] not that we loved
God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be*[9] [b] the pro-
11 pitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought
12 also to love one another. [c] No man hath seen God at any
time. [d] If we love one another, God dwelleth[10] in us, and [e] his
13 love is perfected in us. [f] Hereby know we that we dwell[11] in
14 him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And
[g] we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to*
15 *be* the [h] Saviour of the world.[12] [i] Whosoever shall confess [k] that
Jesus is the Son of God, [l] God dwelleth[10] in him, and he in
16 God. And we have known and believed the love that [m] God
hath to us.[7] [n] God is love; and he that dwelleth[10] in love
17 [o] dwelleth[10] in God, and God[10] in him. [p] Herein is our love
made perfect,[13] [q] that we may have boldness in the day of
18 judgment: [r] because as he is, so are we in this world. There
is no fear in love; but [s] perfect love casteth out fear: because
fear hath torment. He that[14] feareth is not made perfect in
19, 20 love. We [t] love him,[15] because he first loved us. If a
[u] man say, I love God, and [v] hateth his brother, he is a liar: for
he [w] that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can
he love God[16] [x] whom he hath not seen?
21 And [y] this commandment have we from him, [z] That he who
loveth God love his brother also. CHAP. V. 1. [a] Whosoever
believeth that Jesus is the Christ is [b] born[17] of God: and every
one that loveth him that begat loveth [c] him also that is begotten
2 of him. [d] By this we know that we love the children of God,

[m] 2 Thes. ii. 3, 7.
[n] Ch. ii. 13.
[o] Rom. viii. 31; Jo. xiii. 31; 1 Cor. ii. 12.
[p] Jo. viii. 23.
[q] Jo. iii. 31.
[r] Jo. xv. 19.
[s] Jo. viii. 47, xviii. 37.
[t] Jo. xiv. 17.
[u] 1 Tim. iv. 1.
[v] Ch. iii. 11.
[w] Ch. ii. 29, iii. 3.
[x] Ch. iii. 10.
[y] Ver. 16.
[z] Jo. iii. 16; ver. 10; ch. v. 11.
[a] Rom. v. 8, 10; ver. 19.
[b] Ch. ii. 2.
[c] Ver. 20.
[d] Ch. iii. 11.
[e] Ch. ii. 5; vers. 17, 18.
[f] Ch. iv. 13.
[g] Ch. i. 2.
[h] Jo. iii. 17, iv. 42.
[i] Ch. ii. 23; Rom. x. 9.
[k] Ch. v. 5.
[l] Ch. iii. 24.
[m] Ver. 9.
[n] Ver. 8.
[o] Ch. iii. 24.
[p] Ver. 12; ch. ii. 5.
[q] Ch. ii. 28.
[r] Ch. iii. 2.
[s] Jo. iii. 18; Rom. viii. 15.
[t] Ver. 10.
[u] Ch. i. 6.
[v] Ch. ii. 9, 11.
[w] Ch. iii. 17.
[x] Jo. i. 18.
[y] Gal. vi. 2.
[z] Ver. 7.
[a] Jo. i. 12; ch. ii. 22.
[b] Vers. 4, 18.
[c] Jo. viii. 44!
[d] Ch. ii. 5.

[4] which confesseth not Jesus. *Some authorities read* annulleth Jesus
[5] cometh [6] begotten [7] in us [8] hath sent
[9] as [10] abideth [11] abide
[12] and we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son as the Saviour of the world
[13] love made perfect with us [14] hath punishment, and he that
[15] *omit* him [16] *Some authorities read* cannot love God [17] begotten

3 when [e] we love God, and keep[16] his commandments. For [f] this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and
4 his [g] commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born[17] of God overcometh the world: and this is the [h] victory that
5 overcometh[19] the world, [i] *even* our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 [k] This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.[20] And [l] it is the
7 Spirit that beareth witness, [m] because the Spirit is[21] truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the
8 Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth,[22] the spirit, and [n] the
9 water, and the blood: and these[23] three agree in one. [o] If we receive the witness of men, the [p] witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which[24] [q] he hath testified of[25] his
10 Son. He that believeth on the Son of God [r] hath the witness in himself:[26] he that believeth not God hath [s] made him a liar; [t] because he believeth not the record that God gave of[27] his
11 Son. And this is the record,[28] that God hath given to us[29]
12 eternal life, and [u] this life is in his Son. [v] He that hath the Son hath life;[30] *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.[30]
13 [w] These things have I written unto you [x] that believe on the name of the Son of God,[31] that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may[32] believe on the name of the Son of God.

14 And this is [y] the confidence[33] that we have in him,[34] that, if [z] we ask any thing [a] according to his will, he heareth us.
15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know
16 that we [b] have the petitions that we desired[35] of him. If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, [c] he shall ask, and he[36] shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. [d] There is a sin unto death: [e] I do not say that he shall
17 pray for it.[37] All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

[e] Jo. i. 12.
[f] 2 Jo. 6; Jo. xiv. 15.
[g] Mat. xi. 30.
[h] Jo. xvi. 33.
[i] Eph. vi. 16.
[k] Jo. xix. 34.
[l] Jo. xv. 26.
[m] Jo. xiv. 17.
[n] Ver. 6.
[o] Jo. v. 34, 36, viii. 17.
[p] Ver. 6.
[q] Mat. iii. 17.
[r] Rom. viii. 16; Gal. iv. 6.
[s] Ch. i. 10.
[t] Jo. v. 38.
[u] Jo. i. 4.
[v] Jo. iii. 16.
[w] Jo. xx. 31.
[x] Jo. i. 12.
[y] Ch. iii. 21.
[z] Ch. iii. 22.
[a] Rom. viii. 27.
[b] Ch. iii. 22.
[c] Jas. v. 15.
[d] Mat. xii. 31, 32; Mk. iii. 29; Lu. xii. 10; Heb. vi. 4–6.
[e] Jer. vii. 6.

[16] do
[17] hath overcome
[19] hath overcome
[20] not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood
[21] *insert* the
[22] *omit from* in heaven *to* in earth
[23] the
[24] in that
[25] borne witness concerning
[26] within him
[27] because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning
[28] And the witness is this
[29] gave unto us
[30] the life
[31] *omit* that believe on the name of the Son of God
[32] unto you that
[33] boldness
[34] toward him
[35] have asked
[36] God
[37] not of that do I say that he should make request

CONTENTS. The ruling idea of the third part is Faith in the Spirit's testimony concerning the Son of God incarnate. The close of chap. iii. introduces the theme by the first explicit mention of faith and the Spirit. In chap. iv. 1–6 the two opposite confessions, resulting from two opposite hearings of two opposite classes of spirits, are dwelt upon, with the exhortation to apply the test referred to

in the second chapter. The remainder of chap. iv. is occupied with the relation between the love of God manifested in the atonement and its perfect reflection in those who received the evangelical witness of that love: the confession of the Son of God being still the leading principle. Down to chap. v. 5 we have the victory of faith in Jesus as the only source of that love to God in the strength of which we can love our brethren and overcome the world: these two being strictly interwoven. From ver. 6 to ver. 13, the apostle gives his full and final teaching as to the Spirit's witness to the manifested Christ, and the nature of that witness. The remainder, from ver. 14 to ver. 17, is occupied with the confidence in prayer inspired by this faith.

Transition.

Ver. 23. **And this is his commandment**: the one commandment which, as it contains all others, is especially the unity of faith and love. In this Epistle the sum of faith is in the name of Jesus, and the sum of duty is love. It is the Father's will **that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ**: the name stands here for the whole person and work of Christ, not without reference to the confession that follows; and the peculiarity of the phrase here, 'believe the name' with the dative, connotes strongly the ethical feeling of trust. **And love one another even as he**, Christ, **gave us commandment.** Out of the Father's command to believe sprang the commandment of Jesus to love. 'And' implies the energy of faith producing love; and 'even as' is more than 'according to His commandment,' signifying the kind of love that He exemplified and prescribed. This foundation of faith must be remembered throughout the Epistle.

Ver. 24. **And he that keepeth his commandments**—the commandments are plural again, and the obedience is individual—**abideth in him, and he in him.** The mutual indwelling is here and in chap. iv. 12 introduced: in the earlier portion it was 'we in him' chiefly, as it will be again at the close. But these two passages—one individual and the other collective, one said of Christ and the other of God—in the heart of the Epistle are the perfect expression of its keynote. **And hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us**: 'hereby' refers to the obedience; according to the Lord's own word, who promised, John xiv. 20–24, to manifest Himself to him, and dwell with him, who has His commandments and keepeth them. Having that passage in mind, the apostle singles out the indwelling of Christ and makes that supreme. But there is higher testimony than the works, that of the Holy Ghost whose direct assurance is added. He who 'gave' the commandment 'gave' the Spirit of obedience, whose indwelling presence is the indwelling of Christ and the perfect assurance of it.

Episode on the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error; the test to be applied; and the sure application of it.

CHAP. IV. 1. **Beloved** introduces an affectionate interlude, in which the apostle passes from the personal assurance of fellowship with God given by the Holy Ghost, to the assurance given by the same Spirit concerning the doctrine on the belief of which that assurance is based. **Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.** The 'spirits' and the 'false prophets' are one. They are 'antichrists' in chap. ii.; but the predominant reference to the Holy Ghost in this section gives occasion for the use of these two terms: 'spirits' as professing to be His organs, and 'false prophets' as professing to be moved by Him. As teachers they are not to be believed until tested: hence we are not to speak here of the gift of 'discerning spirits' (1 Cor. xii. 10), but of the universal duty incumbent on every Christian, of trying the doctrine brought concerning the Son of God. Many men professing to be inspired had gone out—not as in chap. ii. from the church—from the invisible realm, and from the one spirit of the lie into the world: not from the church into the world, but from the world into the church.

Vers. 2, 3. **Hereby ye know the Spirit of God**: that is, the voice of the one Holy Ghost in the various 'spirits' proclaiming a confession. The personal faith must have its outward avowal; every teacher or 'spirit' must teach on the basis of a confession of Jesus. In chap. ii. the test of antichrist was the refusal to believe that 'Jesus was the Christ' or 'the Father and the Son:' the divinity and Messiahship of our Lord. Here the true faith is **that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh**: not into the world simply, not simply into the flesh, which might connote its fallen condition, but 'in flesh,' that is, in a true humanity He appeared who existed before as the Son of God, and so 'came' that it may be said as of an abiding presence, He 'is come.' The true reading of the antithesis, **every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God**, is most forcible in its simplicity: the name of Jesus is enough, for the confession of a man as come from God means nothing. With the next words, **this is that of antichrist**, that 'matter' or that 'spirit' of antichrist refers back to chap. ii.; though **ye have heard** indicates a well-known doctrine. A remarkable reading of the Vulgate, 'which annulleth' or 'dissolveth Jesus,' points to the severance of Jesus from the Christ, a Gnostic notion, or the separation of Jesus into two persons, a Nestorian error; but this reading is not confirmed. It can hardly be denied, however, that this confession alluded to the Docetic heresy which denied the reality of the Lord's human nature; though that was only a temporary form of opposition to an eternal truth, the sum and standard of all truth.

Vers. 4, 5. 6. The apostle makes some strong assertions which have for their object to link a sound confession with a true religion. First, with reference to his Christian hearers, he connects their personal victory over the world, through the strength of Him who is **greater than he that is in the world**,—that is, its prince, the spirit who sent the antichrists,—with their sound faith. The indwelling God of chap. iii. 24 had given them the victory over all seducers, though they needed still to be warned. Taking up the term 'world,' he goes on to show that the same antichristian error which had come into the world is really **of the world**: doctrines from below which take their fashion from the earthly kingdom of darkness, breathe the spirit of fleshly

reasoning, and taught by men whom **the world heareth,** because it loves its own. The unregenerate have no sympathy with the truth; they only who are born of God can know Him, and understand the things concerning Him. **But he that is of God heareth us**: the apostles and teachers of the faith are chiefly meant; but the same is true of all who witness a good confession. **By this we know,** or distinguish, **the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error,** or the deceiving spirit. At the outset St. John spoke of the test of the confession of Jesus; now at the close the test is the religious and irreligious character of the teaching. He conjoins himself with his readers. Finally, we here have the answer to every argument against the universality of the testing privilege and duty: every Christian can discern between the true and the false confession of the Incarnate Son; and every Christian has the internal qualification of the indwelling Spirit that separates from the world.

The love which this Faith embraces and knows: in its origin; its supreme manifestation; its perfect reflection in us; the whole section being begun, continued, and ended in this.

Vers. 7, 8. Two sentences which exhibit the 'commandment' of brotherly love in a stronger light than hitherto shed upon it. The former is positive. **Love is of God**: love absolutely and in itself, in its own nature and apart from any object, is from the very being of God. This 'out of' is said of nothing but love and regeneration: here the loving in the present is evidence of a birth in the past that still continues; and the present **knoweth God** is the same love discerning and delighting in its source. The latter is negative, and, as usual, still strengthens the thought. All love in man, all love everywhere, is from God; but, more than that, **God is love**: a word that had never before been spoken since revelation began. It closes and consummates the Biblical testimony concerning God as knowable to man: it must be remembered that it is connected with **he that loveth not knoweth not**—literally, 'never has come to the knowledge of'—**God**. Observe that it is not said 'love is God,' any more than it was said 'light is God.' God is light in His revealing and diffusive holiness; God is love in His diffusive self-impartation: both, however, in His relation to His creatures. His eternal essence is unfathomable and behind both. Love is the bond of His perfections as revealed to the created universe. It is also the bond of the intercommunion of the Three Persons in the adorable Trinity; and in this sense His absolute nature; but this goes beyond our exposition here.

Vers. 9, 10, 11. God IS love; and **in this was the love of God manifested in us**: it had its one supreme expression 'in our case,' 'in us' as its sphere. This explains what follows, in the perfect. **That God hath sent** as the permanent token of His love **his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.** Here only is the 'Only-begotten' in the Epistle. He was sent as the eternal Son, the mystery of whose filial relation is expressed by this word: introduced here partly to indicate the greatness of the love by the measure of the gift, partly to connect our life with His. In the Gospel the Only-begotten is given as a proof of love to the world; but the life is given to those only who believe. Here the emphasis is on 'in us;' but the life must here include, on account of the next verse, deliverance from condemnation as well as the eternal life itself: hence not 'in Him,' but 'through Him.' The apostle then goes back from the manifestation to the love itself. **Herein is love**: its origination is not in or through the mission, but in God Himself. Our response is in his thought throughout; but it is only as response: 'love is OF GOD.' **Not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent**—going back again to the past—**his Son as the propitiation for our sins**: thus impressively does St. John show what he meant by 'not that we loved.' He provided and sent what not our love but our sins required. Not 'to be' a propitiation; but 'He sent His Son,' whose mission dating from heaven was atonement. **Beloved**—always 'beloved' in this connection,—**since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another**: not 'so to love,' as if the example prescribed the kind of love; but we are bound by the nature of the love common to Him and to us: it has been manifested 'in us' to that end.

Ver. 12. This verse contains three clauses, which are severally dilated on, though in a rather different order, in the seven verses which follow: the invisibility of God as the object of love; His invisible indwelling nevertheless; and the perfect operation of His love in our hearts as the representative of His invisible self.

Vers. 13–16. Remembering that this whole section has to do with faith in Jesus as the root of brotherly love, we need not be surprised that the apostle goes back to the introductory words of it. Those words, however, are amplified, as usual: the gift of the Spirit is the seal and assurance that **we abide in him and he in us**: our being in Him and His being in us are, so to speak, convertible terms: the Holy Ghost being the common term, common to Him and us. God the invisible is seen and known only by the Spirit's indwelling. But He abides in us as the seal of a great truth confessed. Hence the apostle, before proceeding, pays his homage again to that truth, his own and his fellow-apostle's: **And we have beheld**—in His Son the Invisible God 'whom no man hath beheld at any time,'—**and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son, the Saviour of the world**: the apostolic beholding is followed by their special witness; and this, again, by the confession of the whole Church. Here St. John returns back to the Father and the Son of the earlier chapters, and adds what occurs only here as a confession of faith that Jesus is the Saviour of the world: as in chap. ii. 3, so here it is remarkable as introduced in the midst of a special reference to the benefit of believers.

Whosoever has confessed that Jesus is the Son of God—this shows that the leading theme of ver. 2 is still in the mind of the apostle,—**God abideth in him, and he in God**: the indwelling is individual as well as mutual, and answers to the 'no man hath seen' and every man who 'keepeth His commandments abideth in Him and He in him' (chap. iii. 24); the commandments were faith in Jesus or confession of Him and love: the former is in this verse connected with the abiding, in the next verse the latter. But, instead of proceeding immediately to the love of our obedience, St. John once more—as if never weary of it—pays his tribute to the love of redemption.

And we have known and believed: this of all believers, answering to 'And we have beheld and bear witness' of the apostles. At the basis of the apostolical announcement are beholding and bearing testimony: at the basis of the Church's confession —for the apostle joins the Church in confessing what he had witnessed to the Church—are knowing and believing, which in its proper order is, according to John vi. 69, believing and knowing: abiding faith confirmed in abiding experience. Once more **God is love**: the sublimity of this repetition is inexpressible; and the clause that follows is answerable. In the former case, believers received 'out of' His fulness love; now the believer **that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.** The triple repetition of 'abideth' speaks for itself: **the love which God hath in us** must have its full meaning; and the sentence as it stands carries the privilege of fellowship with God to its highest point; there is nothing beyond it, scarcely anything equal to it, in all revelation. It leads at once to the word perfection.

Vers. 17–19. Here enters the second point of ver. 12: 'His love is perfected in us.' The 'His' is omitted; **herein is love made perfect with us**, that is, in all that concerns our estate. Love is once more absolute and without object specified. 'Herein,' in our living and moving and having our being permanently in love, and in God, is our love 'made perfect:' before we had 'perfected,' now 'made perfect,' afterwards 'perfect.' This is the design of the indwelling Spirit, **in order that we may have boldness in the day of judgment**: the same 'in order that' and the same 'confidence' as in chap. ii. 29, but 'His appearing' is now 'the day of judgment.' **Because as he is, even so are we in this world**: this also goes back to chap. ii. 29, and its sequel: from the last day the apostle returns to our life 'in this world,' not without emphasis on the wonder that we should be made through faith in Him working by love pure 'AS HE IS,' and righteous 'AS HE IS,' even in the midst of this present evil world. The next words are doubly linked with the preceding: first, they are the negative perfection of which being like Christ is the positive; and secondly, they refer to the great essential for confidence in the final day.

There is no fear in love: this is true of the nature of love generally. **But**—admitting that 'the heart may accuse' even lovers of God—**perfect love casteth out fear.** This is the only instance of 'perfect love,' without any qualification or abatement. And the apostle's condensed argument shows that he is speaking of its present triumph in the economy of grace. **Because fear hath punishment**: that pain of which it is said that 'these shall go away into everlasting punishment' is already inherent in fear; **and he that feareth hath not been made perfect in love**: then he may 'in this world' be 'as He is' in holiness, and therefore without the least lingering vestige of fear to meet Him. Observe the change of phrase: as love is perfected in man, so he is perfected in love. The Holy Ghost, 'working by love,' brings the believer—'we have known and believed,' chap. iv. 16—to that permanent abode in the atmosphere of love to God and man from which fear is excluded because sin, the cause of fear, is excluded. Going back to 'in this world,' and remembering that 'boldness in the day of judgment' means confidence in the expectation of His appearing (chap. ii. 29), and further that it is not said of the heavenly city, 'there shall be no more sin,' as if only there sin is absent, we are bound to understand St. John's last testimony on this subject—for he uses the word no more—in its highest meaning.

Ver. 19. **We love because he first loved us.** Looking back, this sublimely shows the possibility that our love—here once more absolute or without object, our 'perfect love'—may become supreme: the argument of 'because' is almost equal to 'even as,' which is, however, not said. But the words look forward to the next verse, and that again looks back to the first of the three points in ver. 12, which has been in suspense during the interim.

Ver. 20. **If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.** All the words here point, as we have seen before, to an utterly spurious Christianity, which knows nothing of the revelation of the unseen God in His Son: the first phrase and the last are used only of such false religion. The 'hating' of chap. ii. 9 became 'not loving' in chap. iii. 10; they are united as synonymous in this passage alone.

For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. There are two condensed arguments here. First, recalling ver. 10, that the invisible God perfects His love in us by the Spirit through our brotherly love, it is simply a strong repetition: the invisible Fountain of love abides in us, and has its perfect operation in our love to its visible objects, embracing all our fellow-regenerate (chap. v. 1). But we have always noted that St. John's repetitions include something more, and here something is added which the former passage did not contain; that is, the inverted argument from the easier demonstration of love to objects before our eyes. Some copies read, 'How **can he?**' which would be only a more vivid form of the argument: not 'how or in what way can he love the unseen save as He is represented by visible objects?' for it is the glory of religion that God can be loved in Himself; but 'it may be merely inferred that he who, supposed to be regenerate, loves not the first and most obvious claimants of his charity, cannot be a lover of the supreme source of all love.' He proves himself to be unregenerate. The more general truth that practical charity is in no case absolutely dependent upon seeing its object is not involved here, nor must the apostle's simple apostrophe be embarrassed by the consideration of it.

The victory of Faith in Jesus as the victory of Love.

Ver. 21. **And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.** The three points of chap. iii. 12 having been discussed, a new subject begins. That is the precept of love given by 'Him,' that is, Christ, whose name needs not to be mentioned, as the second part of the theme of chap. iii. 23: 'And thy neighbour as thyself' is the primitive commandment; but the next verse answers the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' as our Lord does, by inverting the order.

CHAP. v. 1. **Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God, and whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is**

begotten of him. Faith in Jesus as the Christ has here the only meaning that St. John ever gives it: that divinely wrought trust in the work as well as the person of Jesus which the Spirit produces, though He does not say, and which the Spirit seals, which He does say (chap. iii. 25). The exact link between faith and regeneration is untouched. In both members of the sentence our brother is meant. The argument is, like that of chap. iv. 20, derived from the general nature of the case; but it is carried to the highest region, and here has the emphasis. It may be true generally, but it must be true here.

Ver. 2. This is the converse of chap. iv. 20, and as such stands here alone: we know that we love God by the token that we love the brethren; but we also know that we love God's children by the very fact of our loving Him. The two cannot be separated. Still, remembering that the commandment is now uppermost, we must closely unite **when we love God and do his commandments.** The last words introduce the customary enlargement upon ver. 1, which is otherwise only repeated. We love all that are begotten of Him because we love Him: the consciousness of loving God is guarantee that we have in us all that brotherly love means; especially as that love feels in itself the energy of all obedience.

Ver. 3. **For, the love of God is this**—it is in us for this end,—**that we should keep his commandments.** Here, as constantly, some truths are suppressed. The apostle had seemed to assert that the love of brethren seen was easier than the love of God unseen. But there are some who might and who did pervert that principle: having a speculative, transcendent, emotional love of God, they might and they did undervalue the security, the depth, the universality of the self-renouncing devotion to others that brotherly love as the commandment of Christ includes. But he whose love of God is a love of universal obedience, knows that such brotherly love, as the 'fulfilment of the law,' is in itself difficult: it is indeed the 'hard' part of the love of God. **And his commandments are not grievous** is the reply to every suggestion of the failing heart: this is an axiomatic saying, standing here alone; of deep importance and boundless application. The laws of God are reasonable, and in harmony with the purest ethical principles of reason, even the severest of them. But apart from what follows, they are intolerable.

Vers. 4, 5. **For whosoever is begotten of God**—a new form of words, the 'we' of the previous verse with 'that which is born of the Spirit' (John iii. 6)—**overcometh the world**: is victorious over the kingdom of evil generally, and particularly that sphere of the natural man and of self in the atmosphere of which the commandment of brotherly love weighs heavily. **And this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.** Not love here, for faith is the leading thought: faith IS the victory, its strength for that habitual overcoming of every obstacle to obedience which was in it as an original germ, and of the final attainment of which it is the pledge. The past and the present and the future are really here; but the stress is on the present. How it conquers, not in an ideal but a present and perfect victory, then follows in a sentence which takes a negative form but includes the positive reason. **And who is he that overcometh the world, but**—for no other can, 'he and only he'—**he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?** He who in union with 'the Son of God'—the name that always opposes Him to the world and its prince,—partakes His victory: 'I have overcome the world' (John xvi. 33). So much for the words: theology both dogmatic and practical takes them up, and finds in them its richest material. Observe that the discussion of our external relation ends here: the apostle's warning against love of the world, and his encouragement of opposition to the errors in the world, closes with finished and abiding victory over it.

The Divine Testimony to Jesus Christ as the ground of faith: this is first viewed objectively, as a witness in history; then subjectively, as a witness enjoyed by the believer.

Ver. 6. **This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth.** It must be remembered in the exposition of this difficult passage, first, that it is governed by the idea of testimony, human and Divine, that 'Jesus is the Christ' (ver. 1), and 'that Jesus is the Son of God' (ver. 5); secondly, that the very terms used imply a symbolical meaning underlying the literal, for we cannot understand 'water' and 'blood' as pointing to merely historical facts; thirdly, that the apostle has in view the errors of his own time concerning the manifestation of Jesus in the flesh. 'This Person Jesus Christ' who 'came' not into the world, but into His Messianic office as the Christ, 'by water and blood.' There are two leading interpretations of those words. One of them understands by the 'water' the baptismal institute of John, which inaugurated Jesus into His Christly office, and by the 'blood' the passion and death. The other regards St. John as fixing his thought upon the mysterious 'sign' that he beheld after the Saviour's death: when the piercing of His side was followed by the double stream of blood and of water—the blood of expiation and the water of life—which flowed together as the symbol of one eternal life from the living death of the sacrifice. The latter we hold to as the true meaning. But let us do justice to the former: it runs thus.

The error of antichrist concerning the incarnation of the Son of God has been already condemned. The witness borne to this Son of God as the perfected Christ or Saviour is now adduced; and the two great events are made prominent which rounded the Messianic history: the Baptism with its testimony to the Son of God, and the atoning death with its testimony. Jesus came 'by' them as the accompanying media through which He discharged His ministry and the accompanying seals which authenticated Him: these being first viewed as one, giving unity to the design of His coming into His office. St. John might have said, 'He came in the baptism which to Him was the sealing of the Spirit, and in the atonement which finished the work to which He was sealed,' but he is using symbols, and makes the word 'water' stand for the whole transaction at the Jordan, and 'blood' for the whole mystery of the passion and cross. The readers of this Epistle are supposed to have the Fourth Gospel in their hands, and the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews in their minds: moreover, Ephesian

Christians knew well the relation of John's baptism to the baptism of Jesus (Acts xix.). 'Not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood.' The 'by' now becomes 'in,' to mark more impressively the essential connection between the Messiahship of Jesus and that which the water and the blood signified.

Now let us turn to the other interpretation. We mark that the two elements are separated, and each has the article: noting not merely the sacredness of the well-known symbols, but their distinction and relations. No intelligent reader could fail to think of what the writer had certainly had in his thoughts, the mysterious and miraculous effusion of blood and water when the Saviour's side was pierced. That signified, not the fact of the real humanity or real death of the Redeemer, but that the fountain was now opened for the removal of guilt by the blood, and of death by the Spirit, of the crucified; baptism and the Lord's Supper being the abiding emblems and pledges of these gifts. But St. John leaves these reflections to his readers and to us. He simply declares that Jesus came 'not by water only,' but 'in the water and in the blood:' not only was there one stream of life flowing from His death for us, but life under two essential aspects. Eternal life is the removal of the death of condemnation: that is symbolized by the 'blood;' for it is the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin. Eternal life is also the 'well of water springing up within the soul unto everlasting life,' of which the Saviour spoke to the Samaritan woman (John iv.): in other words, it is the life of Christ Himself imparted, and of that the water is the symbol. It is usual to say that the 'water' symbolizes the washing from sin, and the 'blood' the sprinkling from guilt. But since the death of Christ the only washing both from sin and from guilt is by blood. The water signifies here the very well-spring of eternal life itself in Christ opened up within the soul.

The advocates of the other interpretation thus expound 'not by water only.' John the Baptist bore witness to himself as baptizing 'only with water,' and to Christ as 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' The Redeemer was not only authenticated in His baptism as the Son of God, the revealer of the Father and His will, but as the Lamb of God who should die for mankind: not the one without the other. He came at the Jordan that He might go on to Calvary. The apostle silently protests against those in his own day who united the Christ to Jesus in His baptism, but separated them at the cross; and He openly protests against all who limit our own baptism into Christ to mere discipleship of obedience, and forget that He is our master only because as an atonement 'He died and revived that He might be Lord of the dead and the living.'

'And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth.' Hitherto the water and the blood have not been termed witnesses: they were facts themselves witnessed by men. But the Supreme Witness of Jesus is the Holy Ghost, to whom the Saviour Himself bore witness as 'the Spirit of the truth.' St. John singles out His testimony as the only and abiding one, with express reference to the Lord's words: 'not we, the Baptist, the apostles, but the Spirit.' And the tense is changed: the Son of God 'came' once in the great ministry of which water and blood were the symbols; but in the Gospels, and in the preached word, and in the sacraments, the Holy Ghost gives abiding testimony.

Vers. 7, 8. **For there are three who bear witness [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth], the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one.** The bracketed words, if genuine, would, in their present position, be unconnected with the context, making a sudden ascent to the testimony borne by the Three Persons of the Trinity in heaven or from heaven to the Incarnate Son: by the Father generally and at the great crisis of the history of the Redeemer, by the Son to Himself in His exalted estate, and by the Holy Spirit in the administration of redemption. These heavenly Witnesses are but one; and to Them 'the testimony of God' in ver. 9 refers. Then the three witnesses on earth must be supposed to be, in relation to that other testimony, 'the witness of men:' testifying to the perfected Gospel of the ascended Lord under the influence of the Spirit, to the baptism of our Lord and our baptism, to the finished atonement and the sacramental commemoration of it. This introduces a very violent abruptness into the apostle's strain. Without these words the sense runs smoothly on. The Spirit now takes precedence as being still the one and only witness, who bears the testimony throughout revelation and in the history of the Christian Church. But He bears His witness to Christ now and continuously through the records which gather round His baptism 'in water' and His baptism 'in blood;' and through the effects of the faith in His name as the dispenser of pardon and renewal. 'And these three agree in one:' they had been made three, and two of them personified as witnesses, because of the supreme importance of the anointing of the human nature of Christ by the Holy Ghost and of the pouring out of His blood. If there is any allusion to the 'two or three witnesses' by which truth must be established, that allusion is very faint. The apostle hastens to say that the threefold witness converges to one truth, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, faith in whom overcomes the world.

Ver. 9. **If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son.** The 'three witnesses' suggested the perfection of merely human testimony. The apostle supposes as a general truth that we receive the testimony of credible witnesses. But he does not set the Divine witness over against the human: the human and the Divine concur, the divine being 'greater' as accompanying and rendering infallible the human witness to the Saviour's Messiahship and salvation. For, the entire series of attestations borne in the Old Testament and in the New by evangelists and apostles is no other than one grand attestation of God Himself, who witnesseth one thing only, that all His witness by man's agency is concerning His Son. But the Divine testimony is given through the Spirit; 'we are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost.' 'Concerning His Son' is sublimely general. What the witness is we find afterwards: here it is declared that all the objective testimony of revela-

tion has but one object, the establishment of the claim of the Son of God to human faith.

Ver. 10. **He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.** The testimony has become subjective: the 'three agree in one' within the believer's consciousness. He has—for we must anticipate ver. 11—eternal life within him: the gift of the Spirit of life received by Christ for us at His baptism, the forgiveness of sin or release from the condemnation of death through His blood, and the Holy Ghost effecting and assuring both. Faith is followed by full assurance; but the assurance is here the possession of life itself.

But he that believeth not God hath made him a liar: because he hath not believed the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son. He is not only without the internal testimony, but he has also rejected the external testimony, which has been given to one who hears the Gospel record so abundantly that he is without excuse. Once before St. John had spoken of making God a liar: he who denies that he has sinned is a liar himself, and contradicts the express testimonies of God. Similarly, he who believes not the witness given by God concerning His Son rejects the utmost possible evidence that God, knowing man's necessity, could give him. It is supposed that he has the evidence before him, and that in the form of spoken or written evidence; it is further supposed that he deliberately rejects the testimony, knowing it to be Divine. There is nothing stronger, scarcely anything so strong, in all the Scriptures, concerning the moral wilfulness of unbelief. It is not said that he who refuses to accept the testimony to the divinity and incarnation of the Son loses the benefit; nor simply that he blinds his own mind; but that he hears the voice of God and makes Him a liar. Nor are the last words, as has been thought by some, mere vehement repetition. God is made a liar by the man who rejects the eternal life which has been once for all given. The witness rejected is not this or that saying or miraculous demonstration, but the whole strain of proof brought by the Christian revelation that both light and life are come into the world as the heritage of every man who does not wilfully reject both.

Vers. 11, 12. **And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** These closing words concerning that testimony of which the beginning of the Epistle spoke, go beyond anything yet said. They declare that the witness of the apostles concerning 'the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us' is the witness of God Himself, and moreover that it is the one supreme testimony, the sum and substance of all testimonies. Here we have the close of the whole section; and this last saying must throw its light back upon all. The witness of the water and the blood was simply this, that One had come who was the gift of eternal life to man: His baptism with the Spirit was His reception of the Spirit of life for us; His baptism of blood was our deliverance from death. The witness of the blood and water which flowed from His side was simply the testimony of heaven that deliverance from death and the impartation of new life were the one gift of His atoning passion: the one mingled stream for ever flowing from His Person lifted up. He who rejects this, resists the drawing of the Son of man, and makes the Lord who gave the seals a liar. The next words really end the Epistle by an emphatic aphoristic saying that repeats the words concerning the subjective witness, the presence and absence of which is the final test of truth for all profession of Christianity. St. John knows no 'believing in God' which is not 'trusting in the witness;' and he knows of no trusting in the witness which is not followed by 'the witness in himself;' and the internal witness is not to have the knowledge of forgiveness, or the assurance of sonship, as in St. Paul, but these as contained in the possession of 'the life;' and, finally, the life is with him nothing less than the Son Himself possessed. The Son of God hath life in Himself eternally; He is the source of redeemed life; and He is the author or Prince of that life in every believer. The closing testimony of the Bible—for there is nothing after these words—is that **he that hath the Son hath the life**: the life which is fellowship with God, which sin forfeited, is given back to him in union with Jesus. It can by no other means be restored than by union with the Divine life which has been given to man 'bodily' in Christ: the disbeliever or unbeliever, who rejects the witness of God concerning His Son, is in this testimony said to abide in death, or rather to be without the life. **He that hath not the Son hath not the life.** There are many terrors threatened elsewhere against the despiser of God and the rejecter of Christ; but here in the final witness, the sad issue of all is stated in its awful negation, 'the life he has not.'

Ver. 13. St. John returns now to his one great design, the fulfilling of the joy of those who believe. **These things have I written to you**—the whole Epistle, that is,—**that ye may know that ye have eternal life, unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God.** It was not his purpose to establish their assurance, and on that to superinduce a challenge to faith, or to a higher faith, as the reading of our present translation might suggest. Assurance is the final point, and all the blessedness that assurance brings. 'That ye may know:' this is one of the watchwords of the Epistle; and it is here finally introduced in such a way as to show that, while it is the gift of God's Spirit, it is the bounden duty and privilege of every Christian to live in the enjoyment of it.

The confidence in prayer which this faith in Jesus inspires; with its one exception.

Vers. 14, 15. A second time the apostle dwells on the boldness of prayer: this closed the second part as the confidence of obedient love; it closes here the third part as the confidence in the Son of God, which was there introduced as the transition to the third part, and is now resumed.

And this is the boldness, the more specific characterization of the confidence before referred to, **that we have toward him**, toward God, whose children we are in virtue of the eternal life, the life of regeneration. Throughout the New Testament, confidence towards the Father in prayer is represented as the first privilege of the adoption: we have received 'the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father' (Rom. viii. 15). St. Paul says of that Spirit that He 'helpeth our infirmity: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts

knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.' This, and our Lord's word, 'All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive' (Matt. xxi. 22), furnish the best commentary on our passage. As Jesus, the Intercessor in heaven, presents with confidence for us the prayers which the Spirit, the Intercessor in the heart corresponding with Him, teaches us according to the will of God, we may be assured **that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us**: He in fact heareth the voice of His own Spirit within us, and we do not really pray when we ask not according to His mind. This is the sublime perfection of the only prayer which St. John knows; and it is in harmony with the tenor of the whole Epistle, always and in everything making real the highest ideal.

And, if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, all forbidden and doubtful petitions being left out of consideration, as being suppressed before they are uttered, **we know**—for the hearing means hearing with acceptance—**that we have the petitions that we have asked of him.** These last words are very emphatic. We have in the very asking; there is a blessed sense in which the highest prayer is the very experience of the thing prayed for; such asking for forgiveness and peace and holiness is the enjoyment of holiness and peace and pardon. Moreover, 'we have,' and not, as before, 'we receive;' for the Christian life is no other than the constant inheritance of multiplied prayers 'that we have asked' from the beginning, that have been the sum of past supplications. Observe here, without being reminded by the apostle, that the 'fellowship with the Father and the Son,' the main subject of the Epistle, reaches here its highest consummation, so far as the present life and its privileges are concerned.

Vers. 16, 17. The transition from prayer in general to intercessory prayer seems to be abrupt; but it must be remembered that brotherly love is made identical with Christian life, and its offices with doing the will of God. Passing by innumerable other objects of intercession on behalf of a fellow-Christian, the apostle at once rises to its highest function, prayer for his sinning soul. Two phrases just used are still in his thoughts: 'whatever we ask' and 'eternal life,' which the regenerate has in himself, and may obtain by prayer for others.

If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death: already the exception is stated, the solemnity of which requires enlargement upon it afterwards. The sin not unto death is supposed to be seen in a brother, as an act and a state in which he is continuing. **He shall ask**: this is the imperative future, and implies more than is expressed, the admonition and penitence of the offender and the joining him in prayer; these are omitted because the great point is here, as with St. James, the power of one in close fellowship with God, who is supposed in this wonderful sentence to be the very administrant of the Divine will. **And shall give**—the same he in union with God shall give—**him life**: according to the high doctrine of the Epistle, he who sins at all is by the sin cut off from spiritual life; that life is, as it were, suspended. The words that follow, **for them that sin not unto death**, do not simply repeat and generalize the former words, but at the same time qualify the 'life' given and prepare for what follows; the life is only suspended in this case. The 'him' is changed into 'them,' to show the commonness of the fault and the universality of intercession.

There is a sin unto death; which is not only suspended life, but the actual rejection of the Son of God in whom the life is, and whose rejection has been the supreme sin aimed at throughout the Epistle. It is not asserted that the Christian can know that sin to be committed; nor was it said that he knows the brother for whom he prays to have sinned not unto death: He shall give him life if he have not so sinned. The fellowship with God in prayer does not imply fellowship with God's omniscience. The sin unto death is unto eternal death, as the opposite of 'eternal life,' though death and eternal are never combined. No other death is mentioned once in this Epistle; nor is the apostle referring, as St. James does in his similar close of his Epistle, to bodily sickness and recovery of physical health. As there was in our Saviour's time an unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which was unto death because it rejected the Spirit's appeal on behalf of Christ, and as in the Epistle to the Hebrews there is a rejection of the atonement which cuts off necessarily all hope, so in this Epistle the same sin is referred to in the light of its final issue. Those who harden themselves against the Spirit's revelation of the Son are sinning unto death; and prayer for them is unavailing, because they have shut their hearts against the only power that can save them.

Not of that do I say that he should make request. With deep tenderness the apostle excludes this object of intercession, two shades of his expression pointing to his deep feeling: he changes the 'asking' into 'requesting,' as if the awful urgency of the case might prompt a stronger prayer, which would be unavailing; and he simply says, 'Concerning that I do not speak in what I say concerning intercessory prayer.' Now the difference of sins seems to require explanation, especially after what the apostle had said in chap. iii. 4, 'Sin is transgression of law,' and 'He was manifested to take away sins,' and 'He is faithful and just, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Hence St. John quotes himself, inverting the phrase, and says here, **All unrighteousness is sin**, substituting the deeper word 'unrighteousness' for 'lawlessness.' Even the slightest deviation from law and from the perfect principles of right is sin, whether in the believer or in the unbeliever; and therefore the possessor of eternal life must never think lightly of it, but must abhor it as contrary to the life that is in him. Nevertheless there may be traces of death that must be cleansed away, **and there is a sin not unto death.** In the old law there was 'sin unto death,' transgression which was punished with loss of life (Num. xviii. 22); and the Rabbins made the very distinction which St. John here makes. The apostle, however, carries it into the eternal sphere; and leaves the subject with a consolatory word which is itself very stern. He does not say that 'all unrighteousness is sin, but there is sin not unto death.' What he says is that such sin only as is forgiven and cleansed away is not unto death.

CHAPTER V. 18–21.

Conclusion.

18 WE know that whosoever is born[1] of God sinneth not;
[a] but he that is begotten[2] of God [b] keepeth himself,
19 and [c] that wicked one[3] toucheth him not. *And* [d] we know that
we are of God, and [e] the whole world lieth in wickedness.[3]
20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and [f] hath given
us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and
we are in [g] him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. [h] This
21 is the true God, and eternal life. [i] Little children, [k] keep[4]
yourselves from idols. Amen.

[a] Jo. i. 18. [b] Jo. xvii. 12. [c] Ch. ii. 13. [d] Ver. 15. [e] Jo. xii. 31. [f] Lu. xxiv. 45. [g] Jo. xvii. 3. [h] Ver. 11. [i] Ch. ii. 1. [k] 1 Cor. x. 7, 14; Gal. v. 20.

[1] begotten
[2] *Some read* he that was begotten of God keepeth him
[3] the evil one
[4] guard

The Epistle winds up with three summarizing declarations, each of which repeats the watchword, 'we know,' taken, but in a better sense, from the Gnostic 'we know:' the first, ver. 18, asserts the fundamental opposition between life and sin; the second, ver. 19, the fundamental opposition between the regenerate and the world; the third, ver. 20, pays its final homage to the Son of God, in whom we are through an intelligent faith wrought of God. These three are linked, as always, one with the other; the evil one toucheth us not in the first, but in the second the world lieth in his arms, and in the third we, rescued from him, are in God and His Son. The final words close the whole, and close the Bible, with an exhortation against every false conception of God. Hence fellowship with God is the keynote into which all melts at the last: individually, it is communion with His holiness; collectively, it is perfect separation from the world; and both these go up to the Son in whom we are one with God, and safe from idols. This final 'we know' is therefore an exhibition of the Christian privileges in their highest form.

Ver. 18. **We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not.** Having admitted that the children of the Divine birth may sin, both unto death and not unto death, the apostle reminds them most solemnly of what had been established before, that the regenerate life is in itself inconsistent with both kinds. The characteristic and privilege of a child of God is to live without violation of law: all sin is of death, and there is no death in the regenerate life. This is a repetition of what had been said in chap. iii., but the apostle never repeats himself without some change in his thought. Here is said for the first time, that not only he who has been and is born of God, but he who has been once born of God, sinneth not. He has not been, therefore, all along speaking of the unsinning state as the fruit of a finished regeneration, however true that may be. Again, as his manner is, he gives a specific reason for the assertion. The act of regeneration sundered the Christian from the empire of Satan; and it is his privilege to keep himself, in sedulous watchfulness and dependence on the Keeper of his soul, from the approach of the tempter; not from his approach as a tempter, but from any such approach as shall touch him to his hurt. It is wrong to limit this great saying by interpolating 'sin wilfully' or 'sin unto death' or 'sin habitually;' it must stand as the declaration of a privilege which is an ideal, but an attainable ideal, that of living without that which God shall call sin. St. John does not rise to the word which only One could say, 'He hath nothing in Me.' Concupiscence is in the Christian still, and it may conceive and bring forth sin; not, however, if the wicked one toucheth him not. And the concupiscence that the enemy has in us must die if it have not its desire in the soul—'purified as He is pure.' This 'we know' to be the privilege of the Christian estate, as in the middle of the Epistle the apostle has established it. 'We know' is not without protest against all future doubt; it is like one of the 'faithful sayings' with which St. Paul sealed his final doctrine. To understand 'he that is born of God' of the Only-begotten who keepeth the saint, is contrary to the analogy of New Testament diction; and to suppose that the principle of regeneration keepeth him, introduces a certain harshness without obviating any difficulty. There is indeed no difficulty to the expositor who remembers that St. John never disjoins the Divine efficiency in man from man's own co-operation.

Ver. 19. **We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one.** The exquisite propriety of the words must be noted here. There is no 'but,' as before: we know by infallible assurance of our regenerate life that we are of God. This is all we are assured of, and there is no emphatic 'we' opposed to the world: it is as if the apostle would avoid even the semblance of exultation against the ungodly. But the awful contrast is laid down. It is the same 'wicked one' as in the preceding verse holds the entire world, so far as the new life has not transformed it, in his power. It is not said that

the world is 'of the wicked one:' if the 'children of the devil' had been spoken of in a similar connection (chap. iii. 10), that is here explained and softened. The men of the world are 'in him that is false;' but the 'in' is not used in its bare simplicity, but 'lieth in,' a phrase nowhere else occurring, and to be interpreted according to the tenor of the Epistle. The 'whole world' is not, however, the men of the world only; but its entire constitution, its entire economy, its lusts and principles and motives, and course and end: all that is not 'of God' lies in the power and bondage of the wicked one. This the apostle adds as an old truth, never so fearfully expressed as here. The diametrical contrariety between the regenerate who have fellowship with God, and the unregenerate whose fellowship is with Satan, could not be more keenly defined.

Ver. 20. **And we know**—moreover, we know finally—**that the Son of God is come**: this word 'is come' St. John reserves for the end. He who was sent and was manifested is here said to 'be present' with us; and His abiding presence is as it were a sun which reveals and approves itself to all who have eyes to see. We are reminded of the only occasion on which the word is used in this sense, when our Lord declared to the Jews in one sentence the mystery of His eternal Sonship, His presence in the world by incarnation, and His mediatorial mission: 'I proceeded forth from God—I have come—He sent me' (John viii. 44). The children of God know with an assurance that is above all doubt that the Son of God is incarnate with the human race and 'dwells among us:' this is the triumphant close of the Epistle, both as it is a testimony to the manifestation of the eternal life, and as it is a protest against all anti-christian error. Keeping both these objects still in view, the apostle goes on: **and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true**: this new word 'understanding' signifies the inner faculty of the Spirit which discriminates in order to know, which is the result of the 'unction from the Holy One.' Thus inwardly enlightened by Him who is the Truth, through His Spirit, we know 'Him that is true,' that 'only true God' whom thus to know, in His unapproachable distinction from all false gods or objects of hope, is eternal life. In the words of Jesus, which St. John here quotes, 'and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent,' is added. But He 'is come' as the revelation of the Father, and St. John hastens from the spiritual knowledge to the spiritual experience of fellowship with that Father, not 'and Jesus Christ,' but 'in Him.' **And we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ.** The absence of the 'and,' leaving the plain assertion that we are in the true God by being in His Son—thus making the true God and His Son one—is the solution of the question to whom the next clause refers: **This is the true God and eternal life.** This His Son Jesus Christ is Himself the true God, His revelation and presence with us; nor know we any other. Those who see not God in Him, since He has come, serve a god of their own imagination. When the apostle adds 'and eternal life,' he turns from the protest against anti-christian error, which was silently involved in the former part of the clause, to the happy privilege of all believing Christians. They have in the Son that perfect life 'which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.' Thus the end of the Epistle revolves back to the beginning. Christian doctrine is the revelation of the true God in Christ; and Christian blessedness is life everlasting in the Father and the Son.

Ver. 21. **Little children, keep yourselves from idols.** This brief but all-comprehensive sentence closes the Epistle, the entire apostolical testimony, and probably the entire revelation of God. Accordingly it must have a large interpretation. It is a solemn warning, most affectionate but most rigorous, against everything that may invade the supremacy of 'the true God' as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, whether in the doctrine and worship of the Church or in the affections of the regenerate heart. External idols, as still retained in heathenism, though fast passing away, are not excluded from the exhortation of course; but there has been no allusion to them throughout the Epistle, nor did the danger of the 'little children' lie in that direction. Though St. John does not use the Pauline expression that Christians are the temple of the Holy Ghost, the idea of this pervades his whole doctrine. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him: therefore every thought of the mind, every feeling of the heart, and every movement of the will must be faithful in all homage to Him. As addressed to the first readers of the Epistle, the warning was against the false theosophy of the Gnostics; as a prophetic exhortation, it foresaw and guarded against all violations of the doctrine of the Mediatorial Triunity; and, as spoken to the inmost soul of every regenerate Christian, it proclaims the one immutable principle of the Christian religion, that God must be to him All in all.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN.

I.—External: Authorship and Apostolicity.

IT may be taken for granted that these Epistles were written by the same author. According to the almost unanimous tenor of tradition, this was the Evangelist John. For instance, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Dionysius, and Alexander of Alexandria expressly quote from them as his. Origen and Eusebius refer to the two Epistles as suspected by many, but apparently without sharing the doubt themselves. Jerome mentions a current opinion that they were written by a Presbyter John, of whose existence we have only the insufficient witness of Papias as quoted by Eusebius. While it is easy to understand how such a man as Papias should confuse the tradition, it is hard to believe that two writers of the same name should so closely resemble each other in style and tone and authority. Erasmus revived this idea, which had never during the Middle Ages disturbed the tradition of the apostolical origin; and in later times it has been maintained on the ground of certain phrases occurring in the two smaller documents which are absent from the larger one. But in familiar Epistles to individuals such new phrases might be expected; and, though they are striking, they are lost in the multitude of express coincidences in phraseology. The term 'Presbyter' applied to himself by the writer has also been pleaded against the apostolical authorship. But without reason: St. John rarely mentions himself, never his apostolical authority; and the term Presbyter might be used as St. Peter used it, or as St. Paul called himself 'Paul the elder' or 'the aged.' Granting that St. John wrote these Epistles, we may suppose that they were written after, but not long after, the First; and from the same place, Ephesus.

II.—Internal: Characteristics.

I. The Second Epistle stands alone in the New Testament as addressed to a Christian household. It is written to a Matron of note and her children, commending the piety of some members of the family whom the apostle had met, and warning them against the intrusion into their circle of false teachers. Hence it is the worthy pendant of the Third Epistle, which is written to a Christian man occupying an equally important position in his community. It was held by some in ancient times, and by many in later, that the 'lady' was a symbolical expression for the church, or a particular church. A preliminary objection to this is that there is no precedent for such an allegorical mode of expression, nor any obvious reason for it; and then a careful comparison of the two Epistles will suggest that individuals are addressed in both.

The other controversy, as to whether the term rendered 'lady' ought to be regarded as a proper name, cannot easily be settled: the balance preponderates in favour of Kyria being the name of the matron who receives the letter

II. The Third Epistle sheds an impressive light upon the state of the Church when about to lose the light of inspiration and the apostolic presence. St. John's authority in a church probably not founded by himself, was contested even as St. Paul's had been, though for a different reason: it is possible that the extreme age and venerableness which should have secured him honour encouraged a factious and bigoted enemy of the missionary Gospel to oppose him. The immediate occasion of the resistance of Diotrephes and his company was the apostle's recommendation of certain evangelists to the hospitality and general help of this community. St. John's request might have been sent by the hands of Demetrius, whose character, as opposed to that of Diotrephes, is stamped with the most emphatic approval. The issue we do not know, nor indeed anything further about the controversy. But we have a rich side light thrown on the virtue of hospitality, on the missionary activity of the church, and on the apostle's consciousness of high authority. The term church itself, mentioned so often, is important against those who misconstrue the absence of it from the First Epistle: in both the all-essential matter is fellowship with the Father and the Son in and through the Spirit; but in both there is evidently an organized fellowship among Christians, though in the Second only is it called a Church. It is, however, the exhibition of what may be called Family Religion that gives this Epistle, by the side of the Second, so deep and lasting an interest at the close of the canonical Scriptures.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF

JOHN.

VERS. 1–13.

Invocation.—Exhortation to Love, and Warning against False Doctrine.—Conclusion.

1 [a] THE elder unto the [b] elect [c] lady and her children, [d] whom I love in the [1] truth; and not I only, but also all they
2 that [e] have known [f] the truth; For the truth's sake, which
3 dwelleth [2] in us, and shall [3] be with us for ever. [g] Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace,[4] from God the Father, and from the Lord [5] Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, [h] in truth and love.

4 [i] I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children [6] walking in truth, as we have [7] received a [8] commandment from the Father.
5 And now I beseech thee, lady, [k] not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the
6 beginning, [l] that we love one another. [m] And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, [n] as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk
7 in it. [o] For many deceivers are [p] entered into [9] the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ [q] is come [10] in the flesh. This is
8 a [11] deceiver and an [11] antichrist. [r] Look to yourselves, [s] that we [12] lose not those things which we have wrought, but that
9 we [12] receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth,[13] and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, [t] hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ,[14] [t] he hath both the Father
10 and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, [u] receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God
11 speed: [15] For he that biddeth him God speed [16] is [v] partaker of
12 his evil deeds. [w] Having many things to write unto you, I

[a] 3 Jo. 1; 1 Pet. v. 1.
[b] Ver. 13; Rom. xvi. 13
[c] Ver. 5.
[d] 1 Jo. iii. 18; 3 Jo. 1.
[e] Jo. viii. 32.
[f] Gal. iii. 1.
[g] 1 Tim. i. 2; Rev. i. 4; Jude 2.
[h] Vers. 1, 4, 6, Eph. iv. 15.
[i] 3 Jo. 3, 4.
[k] 1 Jo. ii. 7.
[l] 1 Jo. iii. 11.
[m] 1 Jo. v. 3; Jo. xiv. 15.
[n] 1 Jo. ii. 24.
[o] 1 Jo. ii. 18, 26.
[p] 1 Jo. iv. 1.
[q] 1 Jo. iv. 2.
[r] Mk. xiii. 9
[s] Gal. iii. 4; Heb. x. 35.
[t] 1 Jo. xi. 23.
[u] Rom. xvi. 17; Gal. i. 8, 9; 2 Thes. iii. 6, 14.
[v] 1 Tim. v. 22.
[w] 3 Jo. 13.

[1] *omit* the
[2] abideth
[3] and it shall
[4] Grace, mercy, peace, shall be with us
[5] *omit* the Lord
[6] I rejoice greatly that I have found of thy children
[7] *omit* have
[8] *omit* a
[9] gone forth into
[10] they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh
[11] the [2] ye
[12] goeth in advance
[13] *omit* of Christ
[14] and give him no greeting
[15] giveth him greeting

would not *write* with paper and ink: [x] but I trust to come unto [x] 3 Jo. 14.
13 you, and speak face to face, [y] that our joy may be full.[17] The [y] 1 Jo. i. 4; Jo. xv. 11.
children of thy [z] elect sister greet thee. Amen. [z] Ver. 1.

[17] your joy may be fulfilled

I.—*Address and Greeting: From the well-known Elder to a well-known Lady.*

The greeting, with its invocation, fills a large space. It is framed after the manner of St. Paul, and remarkably incorporates the two points of truth and love which occupy the whole Epistle.

Vers. 1, 2. **The elder**—the aged Apostle John, who gives himself this title because it was the only one that combined authority with age—**to the elect Kyria and her children**: nothing is known about the two sisters introduced at the beginning and the end, save that they were influential persons, probably widows with large families. St. Paul speaks of Rufus as 'elect in the Lord,' and St. Peter of 'elect strangers:' no higher term could be suggested by Christian courtesy. **Whom I love in truth**: the 'whom' in the masculine embraces all of the household addressed. They were elect or loved of God, and therefore elect and beloved of the apostle; according to his own axiom in 1 John v. 1. Again, according to his own axiom, he declares that his love was not 'in word and with the tongue,' but 'in deed and in truth:' with special reference, however, to the severe caution which he is about to administer. **And not I only, but also all they that have known the truth**: this Christian matron and her children were well known at home and abroad, bearing the same relation in their own spheres as the Gaius of the next Epistle bore in his. It is obvious that knowing the truth is an expression that has two applications here. On the one hand, it defines religion as the experimental knowledge of the revelation brought into the world by Christ, who said 'I am the Truth:' a definition the force of which was more felt in early times than in later. On the other, it prepared for that distinction between believers in the truth and all false teachers on which the writer purposed to insist. **For the truth's sake which abideth in us and shall be with us for ever.** Obviously the common truth is, like regeneration, regarded as the bond of love. But there is an undertone of allusion to the fact that holding fast the truth is the test of religion, and that their common fidelity endeared the faithful to each other. Hence the change to 'us,' and the quotation of the Lord's words, which applies to the truth what He spoke of the Spirit of truth, 'He abideth with you and shall be in you:' with the change, however, that here the 'abiding is 'in' us, and the 'being' is 'with' us. It is like a preliminary triumph, in prospect of the subject that is coming.

Ver. 3. **Grace, mercy, peace, shall be with us from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.** This is the old invocation, with which the other apostles have made us familiar, but in its fullest form as found in the Pastoral Epistles. It had become the sacred benediction, as including the whole compass of the Divine blessing in the Gospel: grace refers to the fountain of favour to undeserving man revealed in Christ; mercy to the individual application of that favour in the forgiveness of sins and the succour of all misery; peace to the result in the tranquillity of a soul one with God. These blessings come from the Father through the Son of the Father; but the repetition of the 'from' makes emphatic the distinctness and equality of the Two Persons. There is here an observable deviation from St. Paul's formula; as also in the addition of 'truth and love' the two spheres or characteristics of the Christian life in which, though not on account of which, these blessings are imparted. These last words also explain the 'shall be' of the invocation: they express the apostle's confidence that his friends, living in truth of doctrine and charity of fellowship, will ever enjoy this benediction in common with himself.

II.—*The substance of the letter follows: introduced by congratulation, it contains an earnest exhortation to practical love and warning against false teachers.*

Ver. 4. **I rejoiced greatly that I have found of thy children walking in truth.** As St. Paul always prefaced his warnings by praising what he could praise, so St. John expresses his deep joy at having found—his now present joy at having found during his past acquaintance with them—certain of her children walking in the full truth of the Christian religion. **Even as we received commandment from the Father.** 'And this is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as He gave us commandment' (1 John iii. 23). This great preliminary commandment omits the name of the Son because the reception of Him is its substance; and the particular commandments are presently to be mentioned.

Ver. 5. **And now**—this is the purport of the letter—**I beseech thee, Kyria**: the request has in it a tone of dignity as well as of courtesy; the mother is addressed, though some of her children who walked not in love are aimed at: the apostle urges his request, which is sheltered behind the evangelical law, **not as though writing to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning**, in the first person, **that we love one another.** 'Let us all walk in love:' this, as well as the whole strain, shows the same exquisite courtesy which pervades St. Paul's letters to individuals.

Ver. 6. Here we have once more St. John's familiar tribute to the ethical supremacy of love, the new revelation of which by Christ 'in the beginning' sways his thoughts with a peculiar power. The verse is remarkable for its circular argument: love is the walking in all the commandments, the strength to keep them all being in love, and love being their compendium; again, the one commandment heard from the beginning is 'that ye should walk in it,' that is, in love.

Ver. 7. There is no love which is not based on truth: the love which keeps the commandments keeps the doctrinal as well as the ethical commandments. And, as love is the strength of

obedience, so it is the guardian of the truth. Hence the 'for' that follows: **for many deceivers are gone forth into the world**—from the spiritual world, the sphere of the lie—**they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh.** The supreme truth—as truth is in Jesus—is the incarnation. **This is the deceiver and the antichrist,** of whom the former Epistle spoke: the deceiver as it regards you, the antichrist as it respects Jesus. 'Cometh in the flesh' refers in the most general way to the incarnation itself: not as a past fact, 'came in the flesh' (1 John v. 6); nor as the fact with its results, 'hath come' (1 John iv. 2); but in its widest universality, though without reference to the second coming.

Ver. 8. **Look to yourselves**: a rare expression, intimating the deep earnestness of the warning. **That ye lose not the things which we have wrought**: the apostles were God's labourers; but, with refined delicacy, this apostle represents the reward of apostolic work, not as to be received by themselves, but, as to be received by their flocks. **But that ye receive a full reward**: of our work and your own fidelity. The reward of Christian labour is a familiar idea in the New Testament; and the last chapter of the Apocalypse represents the Saviour as coming with His 'reward' 'to render to each man according as his work is,' Rev. xxii. 12. But the labourers' reward is not dependent on the fidelity of their converts, though the converts themselves lose it if unfaithful. The word reward here seems to refer to the other world; but, before mentioning that, St. John deprecates their losing the benefits of apostolic labours, which listening to 'evil workers' would occasion. There is a beautiful contrast in the original words: 'See that ye let not slip all the fruits of our teaching, and all the benefits of your Christian discipline, in the present world; see that hereafter ye be found worthy of the completed rewards of Christian fidelity, as it is written, "Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven"' (Matt. x. 32). The word 'full' has no necessary reference to degrees of recompense: it is used as a most mighty stimulant, and what it means the next verse shows.

Ver. 9. **Whosoever goeth forward, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.** This seems beyond doubt the true reading, and the verse thus becomes one of the utmost importance and interest. To abide in the doctrine of Christ is to remain content with His teaching or what He teaches; to go beyond it is to follow an imaginary development, and affect to be wiser than the Master Himself. The penalty is an awful one: one step beyond the commandment received in the beginning leads to the loss of God. **But he that abideth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Father and the Son**: the change is in St. John's manner, from God generally to the Father and the Son. The Lord Himself declared that 'all things' were delivered unto Him for the instruction of men; and the 'all things' He explained as the knowledge of the Father through the Son (Matt. xi. 27). On this rests the whole 'doctrine' or doctrinal system of the Church, afterwards spoken of generally as 'the doctrine.'

Vers. 10, 11. There is no more impressive word concerning the importance of holding fast the simple truth of the Gospel than what we have just read; and its force is deepened by what follows. **If there cometh**—as come there does and certainly will—**any unto you and bringeth not this doctrine**: a professed teacher, therefore, coming for hospitality, after the manner shown in the next Epistle. It is important to guard the interpretation of these words on both sides. In mitigation of their severity, it must be remembered that the apostle is speaking of an antichrist coming with a doctrine opposed to Christ, and such a man ought to be excluded from the house of every servant of the Lord, whether coming in person or by his writings; but it is in his teaching capacity that he is to be excluded. But, on the other hand, and in vindication of its real strictness, the prohibition of salutation, **and give him no greeting**, does not by any means refer to formal Christian salutation, but forbids every kind of intercourse with him that implies friendly fellowship. The reason is expressly given, and in such a way as to show that fellowship such as hospitality is meant: a courteous salutation, or any act of charity, might be bestowed on him without involving complicity with his evil. But no such friendliness is to be shown as might further him on his way in the very least. 'He that is not with Me is against Me:' there is nothing in this rigour, so often branded as bigotry, that goes beyond the ordinary teaching of the New Testament.

III.—*Conclusion.*

Vers. 12, 13. The apostle, writing on this subject, has more to say than he can write; hence this letter is not an accompaniment of the larger Epistle. He was writing on **paper** or Egyptian papyrus, the pressed coatings of the plant, with **ink**, a preparation of soot and burnt resin and oil: the Third Epistle omits the paper and says **pen** instead, the pen being a split reed. The brief Epistle was in fact the forerunner of his personal presence; the apostle hoped soon to speak all that he had to say, and to hear all he wished to hear, that their joy might be filled. This was the design of his writing the First Epistle; this short one had not that purpose, but needed the supplement of free conversation. The greeting from the children only of the elect sister seems to indicate that their mother was not alive, and that St. John was a guest in their house.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF

JOHN.

VERS. 1–14.

Goodwill to Gaius, and Commendation of him.—The Factiousness of Diotrephes, and the good Example of Demetrius.—Conclusion.

1 THE elder unto [a] the well-beloved Gaius,[1] whom I love [b] in
2 the [2] truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that [3] thou
mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.
3 For [c] I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified
of the truth that is in thee,[4] [c] even as thou walkest in the truth.
4 [c] I have no greater joy than to hear that [d] my children [c] walk
5 in truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest
6 [e] to the brethren, [f] and to strangers; [5] Which have borne [6] wit-
ness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring
forward on their journey after a godly sort,[7] [g] thou shalt do
7 well: Because that [h] for his name's sake [8] they went forth,
8 [i] taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to
9 receive [9] such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth. I
wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, [k] who loveth to have
10 the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore,
if I come, I will remember [10] his deeds which he doeth, prating
against us with malicious words; and not content therewith,
[l] neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth
11 them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church. Beloved,
[m] follow [11] not that which is evil, but that which is good. [n] He
that doeth good is of God: [o] but he that doeth evil hath not
12 seen God. Demetrius hath [p] good report [12] of all *men*, and of
the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; [13] [q] and ye know
13 that our record [14] is true. [r] I had many things to write, but I

[a] Philem. 1, 2.
[b] 1 Jo. iii. 18; 2 Jo. 1.
[c] 2 Jo. 4.
[d] 1 Cor. iv. 15; Gal. iv. 19.
[e] Heb. xiii. 1
[f] Mat. xxv. 35 Heb. xiii. 2.
[g] Acts x. 33. xv. 3; 1 Thes. xi. 12.
[h] Acts v. 41.
[i] 1 Cor. ix. 12, 15.
[k] 2 Jo. 9.
[l] Ver. 5.
[m] Isa. i. 16, 17; 1 Pet. iii. 10-13.
[n] 1 Jo. ii. 29.
[o] 1 Jo. iii. 6.
[p] Acts vi. 3; 1 Tim. iii. 7.
[q] Jo. xxi. 24.
[r] 2 Jo. 12.

[1] unto Gaius the beloved
[2] *omit* the
[3] I pray that in all things
[4] when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth
[5] thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and, moreover, to them as strangers
[6] who bare
[7] worthily of God
[8] For, for the sake of the Name
[9] support
[10] bring to remembrance
[11] imitate
[12] the witness
[13] witness
[14] thou knowest that our witness

14 will not[15] with ink and pen write unto thee: [f] But I trust I [f] Jo. x. 3
shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace
be to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

[15] am unwilling to write

I.—*Address and Expression of Goodwill.*

Vers. 1, 2. Three men called **Gaius**, the Latin Caius, are mentioned by St. Paul, and one of them with the same acknowledgment of his large hospitality; but these lived in an earlier generation. Nothing is said as to his holding any office; he is **beloved** only, the ordinary term of Christian fellowship, though evidently used here in its strongest meaning, **whom I love in truth**, and emphatically repeated in several verses. Instead of the ordinary greeting we have an expression of goodwill, **I wish**, which however is really, as every Christian good wish must be, prayer to God (Jas. v. 15). **Concerning all things** must be connected with the **prosper**, or make good advancement; and one particular is singled out —possibly because Gaius had been sick,—**and be in health.** The prosperity of the soul is the standard of all prosperity: **even as thy soul prospereth**, or makes good advancement.

II.—*Substance of the Letter.*

The substance of the letter is, first, a tribute to the character and work of Gaius, especially his hospitality to Christ's servants, with exhortation to continue this fidelity; then follows the special offence of Diotrephes, the contrast of his conduct with that of Demetrius, and an exhortation to Gaius in relation to both.

Vers. 3, 4. The commendation of Gaius is first general: the apostle rejoices greatly to hear from brethren testimony to his interior religion, **unto thy truth**, as it was openly shown, **even as thou walkest in truth.** The apostle has no greater joy than **to hear that my children**—the members of the Christian family specially committed to his care—**are walking in the truth.** Truth and love are in both these Epistles the twofold and yet one sphere of all religion. The love with its fruits follows in the next verse.

Vers. 5–8. **Thou doest a faithful work**: the labour of Gaius' love is said to be faithful, as corresponding with the commandment of love and true to it. **Towards the brethren, and moreover strangers**: not both brethren and strangers, but, as the sequel shows, brethren who came from abroad. 'Thou doest' marks that the conduct of Gaius is supposed to be habitual, though a special instance had been brought before the apostle. **Who bare witness to thy love before the church**: being evangelists, they gave an account of their travels in the presence of the church where the apostle dwelt; and returning to Gaius for further travels, they are commended to him for further support, to be **set forward worthily of God**, their Master and the Head of their cause. Then follows a tribute to the dignity of their work, and the high claim it gave them. **For the sake of the Name**, the name of Christ who is God, **they went forth**, from the church into the world, though in a very different sense from the going out of the antichrists (1 John ii. 19), **taking nothing of the Gentiles**: this is stated as their fixed principle, to receive nothing from the Gentiles as such, before they were formed into churches; but it contains no maxim for the missionary work generally. It is introduced here for the sake of what follows. **We therefore ought to support such, that we may be fellow-workers with them for the truth**: an important sentence, as showing that they who provide of their substance for the maintenance of the labourer are partakers of his work.

Ver. 9. **I wrote somewhat to the church**: not meaning either important or unimportant, but touching the maintenance of the evangelists; this communication, probably intercepted by Diotrephes, is lost or superseded by the present Epistle. **But Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them**, the members of the church, **receiveth us not**: we know nothing about this man but what is contained in this graphic sketch of him. The evangelists had reported to St. John that neither his authority nor his letter was honoured by Diotrephes; that he rejected both, and spoke against the apostle publicly in a church which was almost entirely under his influence, being opposed by Demetrius and his selecter company, and Gaius keeping aloof probably through sickness.

Ver. 10. We mark here the same tone of faithful sternness which pervades the two other Epistles: in these, however, as against those who assailed the truth, in this against one who invades the order of the church. It is more than probable that Diotrephes was of the Judaizing faction which strove to thwart the publication of the Gospel to the Gentiles; and this would account for the apostle's severity. **I will bring to remembrance** before the church, **his works which he doeth**: not merely his **prating against us with malicious words**, as reported by the evangelists, but his actions, of more importance to the apostle than any words spoken against himself merely. **He casteth them out** who would receive the brethren: by using his influence to have them cut off from the Christian society, whether by formal excommunication or otherwise.

Ver. 11. **Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good**: this is characteristic of St. John, to trace all conduct to its highest source. The spirit and acts of Diotrephes, and those like him, are not of God, not fruits of regeneration: **he that doeth evil hath not seen God**, hath no spiritual knowledge of Him. Writing to Gaius, and writing to all who might possibly be swayed by such influence as that of Diotrephes, the apostle utters a strong warning: to what extent needed by Gaius we can only conjecture.

Ver. 12. The good to be imitated has its example in Demetrius, whose report had reached St. John concurrently with that of Diotrephes: **'Demetrius hath the witness of all** who know him, and of all my reporters: **and of the truth itself**: for the truth of the Gospel reflected in his character is before yourself.' **Yea, we also bear witness**: the very strong testimony to Demetrius was doubtless of the greatest importance at this juncture, and the apostle adds his own witness to

that of men and to that of the truth itself: **and thou knowest that our witness is true** is an affecting appeal to his own personal authority, accepted, if not by Diotrephes, yet by Gaius. St. John probably knew Demetrius, who receives from him as high a commendation as is received by any individual in the New Testament. These men stand here as individuals, to whom the apostle gave his testimony, not only from the evidence of their works, but also from his sure discernment of their character. But they are also representatives of men like-minded who play their part in every age and in all communities. The apostle's warning, commendation, and exhortation therefore are, and were meant by the Spirit to be, for all the future. And this gives our Epistle its permanent value.

III.—*Conclusion.*

Vers. 13, 14. We know not the issue of this Epistle. It was evidently written amidst circumstances which allowed no delay. Though the apostle would shortly visit the church of Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius, he sends this message for the present emergency.

Ver. 15. **Peace be to thee**: the only instance of this personal formula in the New Testament. **The friends salute thee**: again the only instance of the brethren being called friends. **Salute the friends by name**: as if their names were mentioned. The familiar character of the letter may explain these peculiarities; but it must not be forgotten that these several terms carry us back to the Lord's first use and sanctification of them. There can be no higher salutation than the PEACE which came up out of the Old Testament to receive its deeper meaning in the New. And the Epistles of the New Testament worthily end with Peace to the individual saint, and the Salutation of the Brethren who are also 'the Friends' of Jesus individually and by name.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

JUDE, the writer of this Epistle, calls himself the 'brother of James;' and as in the list of the apostles there is James' Judas (the same word in Greek as here), 'the son' or 'brother' being unexpressed, many commentators have concluded that the author of this Epistle was the apostle. This is the view of Jerome, Origen, and Tertullian among the ancients, and that of Calvin, Lange, Tregelles, and others among the moderns; and they naturally identify him with Jude the son of Alphæus, called also Lebbæus and Thaddæus (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18).

Whether he were the apostle or not, he is widely believed to have been 'the Lord's brother' of that name (Matt. xiii. 55), a view adopted by Jerome and Origen, and by Bengel, Olshausen, Lange, Hofmann, and Tregelles.

These views are not absolutely inconsistent; but to hold both is to hold opinions not easily reconcileable. The latter is probably true; the former is questionable. There is no real evidence that Jude the apostle was brother of the James mentioned in this Epistle. Generally, the expression 'Jude of James,' or 'James' Jude,' would mean in Scripture language 'Jude the son of James.' If Jude the writer of this Epistle were an apostle, there seems no reason why he should not have called himself apostle, or why he should have distinguished himself, as he *seems* to do, from the apostles (ver. 17). We are expressly told, moreover, that our Lord's brethren did not believe on him; and though after the Resurrection and Ascension they formed part of the company of believers (Acts i. 14), they could hardly have believed at the beginning of His teaching, or have been appointed as eye-witnesses of His ministry.

From this and similar considerations, it is inferred that the James who was Jude's brother is the James who is called 'the Lord's brother' (Gal. i. 19), and who after the death of James the apostle (the son of Zebedee and brother of John) became the representative of the Jewish tendency of the Christian Church (Acts xii. 17), and rose to something like apostolic dignity; being, like Barnabas, reckoned among the apostles (Acts xiv. 14; compare Rom. xvi. 7, and the Greek of Phil. ii. 25, and 2 Cor. viii. 23). In the Apostolic Council held at Jerusalem, James' judgment was accepted as final (Acts xv. 13). He is supposed to have written the Epistle of James; and of course, if Judas was brother of this James, he held the same personal relation to our Lord.

On the whole, the most probable conclusion is, though not free from difficulties, that the author of this Epistle is Jude, one of the brethren of Jesus, not the brother of James the apostle, who was the son of Alphæus, but of James the Bishop of Jerusalem, of whose influence in the Church he availed himself to introduce his Epistle to his readers.

Of his life nothing is known, as nothing is certainly known of the life of Judas the apostle. Eusebius gives an interesting tradition, transmitted through Hegesippus, that two grandsons of Jude, who 'according to the flesh' was brother of our Lord (see 1 Cor. ix. 5), were seized and taken to Rome by order of Domitian, whose fears had been excited by what he had heard of the progress of Christ's kingdom. When, however, he found from their replies to his inquiries, and from the appearance of their hands, that they were plain men supporting themselves by their own labour, and that it was a spiritual kingdom they sought to set up, he dismissed them and stayed the persecution he had planned. They are said to have lived till the time of Trajan. The wife of this Jude is said (Nicephorus, i. 23) to have been Mary.

The relation of the Epistle of Jude to the Second Epistle of Peter has led to much discussion. The parallel passages of the two Epistles are Jude 3–18, and 2 Pet. i. 5, and ii. 1–18. Their resemblances both in thought and in language are close and obvious (though there are differences in every verse), and the writers must have been in communication, or one must have seen the Epistle of the other. Internal evidence is in favour of the prior authorship of Jude. The terseness of the style, the freshness and vigour of the imagery, the close coherence of the thought, the very peculiarity of the words, there being in the twenty-four verses of the Epistle some eighteen found only here in the New Testament, are against the supposition that the Epistle was borrowed; whilst, on the other hand, the parallel passage of Peter appears to differ from Peter's usual style. If this view be accepted, the probable date of the Epistle is between A.D. 64 and 66. It must have been written late, and yet prior to the date of Peter's Epistle; and that apostle died about A.D. 68. A later date, subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem, makes it necessary to suppose that it was taken in part from 2 Peter, and adds the difficulty that no note is taken of the destruction of Jerusalem, one of the most striking instances of the punishment of the 'ungodly.' It addresses the same class as the Second of Peter—false teachers who pervert the Gospel, the advocates of that gnostic antinomianism which formed many sects and devastated the churches of Asia Minor, as it did other churches throughout the farther East. On the probable supposition that Peter wrote with a view to the Jewish Christians in Asia Minor, while Jude addressed those of Palestine and Egypt, whence indeed we have one of the earliest recognitions of the authenticity of his Epistle, we have a reason for the repetition of the same teaching in the two Epistles.

The evidence on its canonicity is as follows. It is wanting in the common Peshito-Syriac, though found in the MS. in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and is quoted as apostolic by Ephrem the Syrian. It is found in the Muratorian Fragment (about A.D. 170). Clement of Alexandria is the first writer who speaks of its authority. Eusebius tells us that it was among the canonical books that were expounded in public, while some regarded it as spurious. Origen refers to it as the work of the Lord's brother, and quotes it several times as 'filled with vigorous words of heavenly grace.' Tertullian and Jerome quote it as the work of an apostle. And it is contained in most of the lists (Laodicæan, A.D. 363; Carthaginian, 397, etc.). The difficulties felt as to its canonicity originated in the uncertainty of its authorship and of its author's standing in the Church, the nature of the contents and their resemblance to those of 2 Peter, and the supposed quotations from apocryphal books. The preponderance of belief, however, both in ancient and in modern times, is decidedly in its favour.

Contents and Argument.

After the usual salutation and prayer (vers. 1, 2), there comes a statement of the design of the Epistle (ver. 3), with the reasons for writing (ver. 4). Then follows Part I., giving in section (*a*) examples of the punitive justice of God—when dealing with such ungodly and corrupt persons as are described—in three leading examples: Israel (ver. 5), the fallen angels (ver. 6), and the Gentile people of Sodom and Gomorrha (ver. 7); and giving in (*b*) a more particular account of those men and their deeds: they defile the flesh; they despise and rail at authority; they copy the sins of Cain, and Balaam, and Korah (vers. 8–11). Their detestable character is further described in vers. 12, 16, and 19, with a parenthetic description of them and of their destiny and of those like them, as foretold in the prophecy of Enoch (vers. 14, 15). Their voluptuousness, selfishness, discontent, their pride and flattery, their tendency to create separations from the faith and purity of the Church, and their gross carnality, are all set forth in terse and strong language.

Part II. calls upon believers (*a*) to show mindfulness of the words of the apostles, who foretell the coming of such deceivers and scoffers (vers. 17, 18); (*b*) to continue in faith and prayer and love and hope (vers. 20, 21); (*c*) to exercise a kindly, prompt, and earnest treatment of those who may be led astray by these false teachers, according to the character of each, yet with earnest hatred of their sin (vers. 22, 23); and concludes with the usual doxology, expressed in words which abound in consolation.

Dean Alford has well described the Epistle as an 'impassioned invective, in which the writer heaps epithet on epithet, and image on image, and returns again and again to the licentious apostates against whom he warns the Church, as though all language were insufficient to give an adequate idea of their profligacy and of his own abhorrence of their perversion of the grace and doctrines of the Gospel.' It may be added that the Gospel is still abused and perverted through the selfishness and worldliness of professedly Christian men, and that the admonitions of this Epistle and the coming judgment of which it speaks are well fitted to arouse men to watchfulness and repentance. The practical comments of Perkins, Jenkyn, Bickersteth, Stier, and others show how rich it is in lessons which apply to every age.

Note.

Other Commentaries of this Epistle may be named and characterized:

Manton, Thomas, D.D. — *A Practical Commentary*, delivered in weekly lectures at Stoke-Newington. Lond. 1658. Practical and characteristic.

Witsius, H.—*Comm. in Epis. Judæ. Meletemata Leidensia* (first published in 1703). Basel, 1739. Written with learning and judgment.

Lange's *Biblical Comm.*, vol. ix.—Translated from Fronmüller, with useful additions by Dr. J. I. Mombert, 1867.

Lillie's *Epistle of Judas.*—Translated from the Greek, with notes. New York (Amer. B. Union), 1854. An able and careful work.

Muir, W., D.D.—*Discourses Explanatory and Practical.* Glasg. 1822.

Gardiner, F.—*A Commentary on Jude.* Designed for the general reader and exegetical student. Boston, U.S., 1856.

THE EPISTLE OF

JUDE.

(*Note.*—All passages with (*) prefixed resemble *in words* the parallel passages in Second Peter.)

VERSES 1–25.

1 JUDE, the [1] servant [2] of Jesus Christ, and [a] brother of James, to them that are sanctified by [3] God the Father, and [b] pre-
2 served in [4] Jesus Christ, *and* [c] called: [5] [d] Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

3 Beloved, when I gave [6] *all diligence to write unto you [e] of the [7] common salvation, it was needful for me [8] to write unto you, and exhort *you* that [f] ye should earnestly contend for the
4 faith which was once [9] delivered unto the saints. [g] For there are *certain men crept in unawares, [h] who were *before [10] of old ordained [11] to this condemnation, ungodly men, [i] turning [k] the grace of our God into *lasciviousness, and [l]* denying the only Lord God, and our Lord [12] Jesus Christ.

5 I will therefore [13] put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this,[14] how that [m] the Lord, having saved the [15] people out of the land of Egypt, afterward [16] [m] destroyed them that believed
6 not. And [n]* the [17] angels which kept not their first estate,[18] but left their own habitation, [o] he hath *reserved [19] in everlasting chains [20] under *darkness [q] unto the judgment of the
7 great day. Even as [21] [r]* Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going *after strange flesh,[22] are set forth for an
8 example, suffering the vengeance [23] of eternal fire. [s] Likewise also these *filthy* dreamers [24] defile the flesh, despise [25] dominion,

[a] Lu. vi. 16; Mat. xiii. 55; 1 Cor. ix. 5.
[b] Jo. xvii. 11, 15.
[c] Rom. i. 7.
[d] Only in 1 and 2 Tim. i. 2, and Tit. i. 4; *2 Pet. i. 2.
[e] Tit. i. 4.
[f] Phil. i. 27; 1 Tim. i. 18, vi. 12; 2 Tim. i. 13, iv. 7.
[g] Gal. ii. 4. *2 Pet. ii. 1.
[h] Rom. ix. 21, 22; 1 Pet. ii. 8.
[i] 2 Pet. ii. 20.
[k] Tit. ii. 11; Heb. xii. 15.
[l] Tit. i. 16; 1 Jo. ii. 22.
[m] 1 Cor. x. 9.
[n] Num. xiv. 29, 37, xxvi. 64; Ps. cvi. 26; Heb. iii. 16, 19.
[o] Jo. viii. 44.
[p] *2 Pet. ii. 4.
[q] Rev. xx. 10.
[r] Gen. xix. 24; Deut. xxix. 23; *2 Pet. ii. 6, 10.
[s] *2 Pet. ii. 10.

[1] a [2] *Gr.* bond-servant [3] *read*, beloved in [4] kept for
[5] being called, *or*, to the called, beloved, *etc.* [6] whilst I was giving
[7] *read*, our [8] I felt it needful [9] *insert* for all [10] *omit* before
[11] written of beforehand for, *or*, set forth for [12] *read*, our only Master and Lord
[13] Now I desire to [14] once for all know all things [15] a
[16] *Gr.* in the second place (the next thing he did was to destroy)
[17] *omit* the [18] *or*, own rule (*or*, dominion)
[19] kept (*as in ver.* 1 *and earlier in ver.* 6) [20] bonds [21] As, *or*, How
[22] of another kind (Rom. i. 21; Lev. xviii. 23, 24) [23] *rather*, punishment
[24] *rather*, Yet these in like manner also in their dreamings [25] set at nought

9 and [t*] speak evil of dignities.[26] Yet [u] Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, [v*] durst not bring against him a railing[27] accusation,
10 but said, [w] The Lord rebuke thee. [x] But these speak evil of those things which[28] they know not: but[29] what[28] they know naturally, [*] as brute beasts,[30] in those things they corrupt[31]
11 themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way [y] of Cain, and [z*] ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished [a] in the gainsaying of Core.
12 [b] These are spots[32] in your [c] feasts of charity,[33] when they feast with you, [d] feeding themselves[34] without fear: [*] clouds *they are* without water, [e] carried about[35] of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, [f] plucked up by the
13 roots; [g] raging[36] waves of the sea, [h] foaming out their own shame;[37] wandering stars, [i*] to[38] whom is reserved[39] the blackness of darkness for ever.
14 And Enoch also, [k] the seventh from Adam, prophesied of[40] these, saying, Behold, [l] the Lord cometh[41] with ten thousands
15 of his saints,[42] to execute judgment upon all, and to convince[43] all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds[44] which they have ungodly committed, and of all their [m] hard *speeches*[45] which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.
16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and [n*] their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*; [o] having men's persons in admiration because of[46] advantage.
17 [p*] But,[47] beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken
18 before of[48] the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you [q*] there should be[49] mockers in the last time,
19 who should walk[50] after their own ungodly lusts.[51] These be they [r] who separate themselves,[52] [s] sensual, having not the Spirit.
20 But ye, beloved, [t] building up yourselves on your most holy
21 faith, [u] praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, [v] looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto
22 eternal life. And of some have compassion,[53] making a differ-

[t] Ex. xxii. 28. [u] Dan. x. 13, xii. 1; Rev. xii. 7. [v] *2 Pet. ii. 11. [w] Zech. iii. 2. [x] *2 Pet. ii. 12. [y] Gen. iv. 5; 1 Jo. iii. 12. [z] Num. xxii. 7, 21; *2 Pet. ii. 15 [a] Num. xvi. 1, etc. [b] *2 Pet. ii. 13. [c] 1 Cor. xi. 21. [d] Is. lvi. 11. Cp 1 Pet. v. 2; *2 Pet. ii. 17. [e] Eph. iv. 14. [f] Mat. xv. 13. [g] Isa. lvii. 20. [h] Phil. iii. 19. [i] *2 Pet. ii. 17. [k] Gen. v. 18. [l] Deut. xxxiii. 2; Dan. vii. 10; Zech. xiv. 5; Mat. xxv. 31; 2 Thes. i. 7; Rev. i. 7. [m] 1 Sam. ii. 3; Ps. xxxi. 18, xciv. 4; Mal. iii. 13. [n] *2 Pet. ii. 18. [o] Prov. xxviii. 21; Jas. ii. 1, 9. [p] *2 Pet. iii. 2. [q] 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 1, iv. 3; *2 Pet. ii. 1, iii. 3. [r] Prov. xviii. 1; Ezek. xiv. 7; Hos. iv. 14, ix. 10; Heb. x. 25. [s] 1 Cor. ii. 14; Jas. iii. 15. [t] Col. ii. 7; 1 Tim. i. 4. [u] Rom. viii. 26; Eph. vi. 18. [v] Tit. ii. 13; 2 Pet. iii. 12.

[26] rail at dignities, *Gr.* glories [27] *as in vers.* 8, 10 [28] whatever things
[29] and [30] *Gr.* living things, without reason [31] *or*, destroy
[32] *read*, These are they who are, *and for* spots *rather* sunken rocks
[33] love feasts [34] shepherds feeding themselves [35] *read*, carried along
[36] wild [37] *Gr.* shames—kinds *or* acts of shame [38] for
[39] is (*or*, hath been) kept (*as in vers.* 1 *and* 6) [40] to (*or*, for)
[41] *Gr.* came [42] holy ones [43] *i.e.* to convict
[44] *Gr.* their deeds of ungodliness [45] the hard things
[46] having men's persons in respect for the sake of [47] But ye (*as in ver.* 20)
[48] have been spoken before by
[49] said to you, There shall be . . . walking, *etc.* (*to get rid of the ambiguous* should)
[50] walking [51] *Gr.* lusts of ungodliness
[52] *read*, make separations (*or*, divisions) [53] on some have mercy

23 ence:[54] and others [w] save with fear, [x] pulling *them* out of the fire;[55] hating even [y] the garment spotted by the flesh.

24 [z] Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling,[56] and [a] to present[57] *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with

25 exceeding joy, [b] to the only wise[58] God our Saviour,[59] *be* glory and[60] majesty, dominion and power, both[61] now and ever.[62] Amen.

[w] Rom. xi. 14; 1 Tim. iv. 16.
[x] Amos iv. 11; Zech. iii. 2; 1 Cor. iii. 15.
[y] Zech. iii. 4, 5; Rev. iii. 4.
[z] Rom. xvi. 25; Eph. iii. 20.
[a] Col. i. 22.
[b] Rom. xvi. 27; 1 Tim i. 17, ii. 3.

[54] while they are in doubt, *or*, while they dispute with you (*as in ver.* 9)
[55] *read*, Others save, pulling (snatching) them out of the fire; and on others have mercy with fear
[56] guard you from stumbling
[57] *Gr.* set; make you to stand
[58] *omit* wise
[59] *insert* through Jesus Christ our Lord
[60] *omit* and
[61] *insert* before all time, *and read* and
[62] for evermore (*lit.* for all the ages, *or*, *as in previous clause*, times)

Ver. 1. **Judas.** This name is of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, and is given in the shorter form, Jude, only here in the Authorised Version, perhaps to distinguish the writer from Iscariot; but the following clause is sufficiently distinctive; and it should be noted that the name is uniform in the Greek.—**and brother of James.** The Greek 'and' expresses a Greek affirmativeness not quite equal to 'but the brother,' though approaching it. If he were, as suggested in the Introduction, the brother of our Lord as well as of James, neither of whom speaks of his relation to Christ, the omission is probably owing to the fact that the human relation was temporary and entirely subordinate to the higher relation of spiritual fellowship (Matt. xii. 49). As brother, moreover, he did not at first believe, and so the relation itself was at once humbling and honourable.—**To them that are called.** Not invited merely, but having accepted the invitation, and having therefore the 'calling' of sons. This is the uniform meaning in Scripture; not having the name, but the character (comp. 'a man's calling').—**beloved in God the Father** (the true reading). Our affection for Christians springs from their relation to Christ and their likeness to Him, as our love for God's children rests on the same grounds. This is the brotherly love of the Gospel as distinguished from the love of good-will. If 'sanctified' is adopted as the reading, then it may be noted as an unusual expression, Christians being said to be sanctified (freed from the guilt of sin, and made fit for God's service) *in Christ*. The meaning of both expressions is, that in communion with Christ through faith they have been freed from the guilt of sin, and that their faith, working as it was by love, is the beginning of personal holiness (1 Cor. i. 2).—**kept.** The nearly uniform rendering of this verb is 'kept;' and the keeping, it is important to notice, is the fulfilment of the intercessory prayer of our Lord (John xvii.). The safety of all who believe is the Father's answer to the Son. God keeps us as we keep His word (Rev. iii. 3, Greek). Nor is the writer's play upon this expression throughout his epistle without its meaning. 'God keeps us for Jesus Christ;' we 'keep ourselves in the love of God' (ver. 21). Evil angels are kept for judgment, because they 'kept not their first estate' (ver. 6). And a like play upon the word is found in 2 Peter.—**for Jesus Christ** is the meaning, not 'in;' for He created them, and redeemed them, and renewed them; they are therefore His own possession (His '*peculiar* people'), and as His, are kept for and finally presented to Him (cp. John xvii. 6, 12).

The order of the words admits of another, though a less likely interpretation:—'to those in God the Father, beloved, and kept for Jesus Christ, being called;' but the parallelism of the thought is better preserved by the rendering given above.

Ver. 2. **Mercy unto you, and peace, and love.** 'Mercy' is used in the salutation of the pastoral epistles only—except here. In Paul's view, those who minister in holy things specially need it, as in Jude's view do those whom he addresses. 'Mercy' is God's feeling towards them; 'peace' is their condition as the result of it; 'love' is either their feeling Godward and manward as the effect of God's grace (so it is in Eph. vi. 23), or it is God's love to them that are called, in the manifold expressions of it (so it is in ver. 21, and in 2 Cor. xiii. 14). This last view seems preferable; it is for the fulness of love he prays, as it is for abundance of mercy and peace.

Ver. 3. **Whilst I was giving, or using, all diligence**; either inwardly in purpose, finishing one work and postponing another; or outwardly in actually writing what was not finished (de Wette). The latter is rather favoured by the tense of 'write' (which is present, not aorist); but the former is probably the correct view. Anyhow, it was his purpose to write on the great truths of the Gospel—the common property of all who believe.—**I felt constrained to write and exhort you to fight for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.** A richer evangelical epistle would have been more welcome to the writer; but, like Paul, he had to meet the needs of those for whom he ministered; hence his words are full of rebuke against the teachers who were leading them astray, and of loving warning to themselves. The word *to fight*, or strive earnestly, means to stand over and defend to the utmost, even to agony; 'the faith,' not quite the doctrines of Scripture, still less their belief of them, but the Gospel, as believed by Christian men. *Once for all delivered* points to the completeness and unchangeableness of the Gospel, and to the fact that no new revelation was to be

expected. The doctrine of development subsequent to the apostles is not the doctrine of Scripture. We may gladly admit, as Boyle puts it, that 'there are passages whose full meaning is reserved to resolve some yet unformed doubt, or to confound some error that hath not yet a name, or to throw fresh light on admitted truths.' There is, in fact, no definable limit to our profounder insight into the Gospel; but additions to the Gospel itself Scripture disowns. Traditions post-apostolic are now entitled to no other deference than is due to their intrinsic reasonableness, or to their consistency with what is already revealed.

Ver. 4. **For there are certain men**; unknown, insignificant men, or otherwise not worth describing; but when their true character was seen, it was plain that they belonged to a class long before described in many an Old Testament passage; notably in the prophecy of Enoch (ver. 14), probably in the punishment of the Israelites (ver. 5), of the rebel angels (ver. 6), and in letters of fire on the plain of Sodom and Gomorrha (ver. 7).—**Crept in** is probably sufficient; **unawares** is even less accurate, suggesting that there may have been neglect upon the part of the Church, whereas it is the stealthy movement of those who have entered that is rebuked. They came in by a side door; not that they crept in from without, being really no members of the Church; but only that they came in as members, and yet had in fact, as was now clear, sentiments and habits foreign to those of a Christian community, and ought never, therefore, to have entered it at all. (See the same phrases in 2 Pet. ii. 1, and Gal. ii. 4.)—**before of old ordained** is peculiarly unhappy. There is no predestination in the words, but only Scripture prophecy, or public information. The word is used in the New Testament four times (or five if we retain the common text in Rom. xv. 4), and is rendered twice 'written before.' In Gal. iii. 1 and here it probably means, from the custom of writing matters of general interest on tablets for public information.—**have been evidently set forth**, or written of as subject to this condemnation or judgment; 'proscribed' or 'designated,' other renderings, is too strong. Their character is further defined; they are **ungodly men**, with whom God's holiness is no ground of reverence, nor His law their guide, who, having broken loose from His authority, show their ungodliness in all they do, and especially in two forms; they pervert or **turn the grace of God**, the proffered gift of God in the free forgiveness of sin, with all its helps to holiness and blessedness, **into lasciviousness**; just as liberty is turned into licentiousness (Gal. v. 13); just as of old the removal, one after another, of the plagues with which Pharaoh was visited ended in renewed hardness of heart and in repeated sin. The more gracious God is, the more wanton they become.—**and they deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.** The word 'God' goes out by preponderating authority. If it were retained, the description would imply that they denied both the Father and the Son. Even without 'God' it is a possible meaning (the only Master and the Lord Jesus Christ), as it is a possible meaning in Tit. ii. 13; but the more accurate and the more natural meaning of the Greek refers both terms to Christ; and on comparing the passage with 2 Pet. ii. 1, where these men are said to 'deny the Master that bought them,' the conclusion seems inevitable that both terms are to be applied to Christ. though everywhere in the New Testament, except here and in 2 Peter, the word 'Master' is applied to God the Father. Christ is here called their one absolute Lord and Owner, not in contrast with the other persons in the Godhead, but with foreign lords who once had dominion over them. They are called godless, indeed, chiefly because they pervert the grace that is in Christ, and deny the claims of Him who first created and then redeemed them.

Vers. 5-7. In these verses we have examples of the judgment spoken of in ver. 4. It is only necessary, says the writer, that I should remind you of facts with which you are already familiar. You have been instructed in the Gospel; you have accepted what is a revelation of righteousness as well as of love; and you have once for all had the perception of all that is essential to salvation, whatever may be said by those false teachers who boast of their profounder knowledge and superior wisdom (gnosticism as it came to be called): **how that the Lord having saved a people** (an entire nation, His own) **out of the land of Egypt, the next thing he did was to destroy them that believed not.** These words may refer to the destruction mentioned in Num xxv. 1-9, or it may refer to their entire history which is, in brief, salvation and judgment, true of them at first, and true of them even to the close.

Ver. 6. A second example is taken from **angels, those who kept not their dominion**, their rule (or principality, as in Rom. viii. 38, a form of the same word; or their original, 'their first estate,' a meaning less in accordance with Scripture usage). They were placed over material creation as rulers under God, but they left their proper office and abode, and set up a kingdom of their own (Col. i. 13), and are therefore **kept under darkness unto judgment of the great day.** Who they were and how they sinned has been much questioned. The notion that they are 'the sons of God' mentioned in Gen. vi. 4, and that they fell through fleshly desires, is affirmed in the Book of Enoch; and some have thought this explanation to be the meaning of the passage in Genesis. But it is very doubtful whether Jude quotes the Book of Enoch; and if he does, he certainly differs not unfrequently from its teaching. The passage in Genesis, moreover, refers rather to the intermarriage of the descendants of Seth and of Cain. Further, this interpretation is inconsistent with what is said by our Lord of the angelic nature, and it is, besides, an anticipation of the sin mentioned in the next verse. Probably, therefore, the verse points to a sin of another kind, and to an earlier time. Milton's account is probably nearer the truth (cp. 1 Tim. iii. 6).

Ver. 7. A third example is taken from the Gentile cities of **Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, having given themselves over in like manner** as the people of those cities did, or as these false teachers have done, **and having gone after strange** (different) **flesh**; practising shame, man with man, and even man with beast. How true this is of the tendency of some teaching may be seen in classic writers, and in such testimony as Irenæus gives of the practices of the Nicolaitans (i. 20).—**they lie before** the eyes of men (either in the region they once occupied or

in their history) **an example and a proof of eternal fire, still suffering as they do the punishment** [of their sin]; or it may be taken, an example and a proof [of what I am affirming], suffering as they do the punishment of an eternal fire. The argument is either analogical or positive. As Sodom and Gomorrha suffered the punishment of a fire that consumed them utterly, so that they will never be restored, so the wicked will suffer as long as they are capable of suffering. This is analogical. Or, as Sodom and Gomorrha are really suffering the punishment of which the fiery overthrow of their cities was the symbol, so shall these men be punished. This is positive, and is favoured by all those passages in which death is used not as material death only, but as continued life—the cessation not of being but of well-being—the destruction which is not annihilation.

Ver. 8. **And yet these men** (ver. 4) actually do the same things as the people of Sodom and the fallen angels. — **in their dreamings they defile the flesh**, that of others as well as their own; they live in the feelings of their own perverted sense, and they corrupt others as well as themselves (others sharing in their sin); **and they set at nought** lordship, ownership, **dominion** (the supremacy that belongs to one who is lord), **and rail at dignities** (*Greek*, glories —the splendour that belongs to those who are exalted). The statement may be general, or it may refer to Christ and to the authority of His kingdom. In favour of the former view is the fact noted by many moralists that licentiousness is closely connected with contempt for all authority: no other vice, indeed, so easily demoralizes the entire nature. The second view is more in harmony with the context. Some refer the 'dignities' here spoken of to evil angels, under whose power these teachers had fallen, and whom nevertheless they mocked as powerless, or even as imaginary beings, and they appeal in proof to the next verse. But the connection of the two verses is of another kind. We are not to rail at even Satan, nor at earthly princes or dignities, though they be his instruments: he and they are to be left in God's hands.

Ver. 9. They do against dignities what even the archangel would not do against Satan. Michael ('who is like God') was regarded as the guardian angel of the nation of Israel (Dan. xii. 1; cp. x. 13, 21). In the New Testament he is mentioned only here and in Rev. xii. 7. 'Archangel' is mentioned only here and in 1 Thess. iv. 16. — **about the body of Moses.** The Jews had various traditions about the burial of Moses. According to Jonathan (on Deut. xxxiv. 6), the grave of Moses was given to the special care of Michael; and to this tradition most commentators ascribe the introduction of the circumstance here. Others suppose that Christ Himself, in connection with the appearance of Moses at the Transfiguration, may have sanctioned the tradition. Nothing is said of it in the Book of Enoch. . . . Origen speaks of a book extant in his day (the *Assumption or Removal of Moses*) as the source whence Jude derived his account; but there is no evidence that the book was in existence when Jude wrote. The most probable explanation is that there was a Jewish tradition to which Jude appeals.—**when contending he disputed** shows that it was verbal altercation not unlike that recorded in the case of Job (chap. i.) and in Zech. iii. 1–3. The solution that God revealed these facts to Jude is of course possible, but it is not likely. That the facts should be previously known is of the very essence of the argument.

Ver. 10. **But these**, who 'defile the flesh,' as they 'rail at dignities' (ver. 8), **at whatever they know not**—the whole range of invisible and heavenly things, and even the nobler sentiments of our nature—**they rail**; and **whatever they know naturally as brute beasts** ('irrational animals'), their instincts and propensities, even these they abuse, for they surrender themselves to them, and in these **destroy** (or **corrupt**) **themselves**; and so they are worse than brutes. 'As drunk as a beast' is, in truth, a libel on the lower creation. Drunkenness and like abuses of natural appetite are sins of man only. The two verbs used in this verse, 'know' and 'know,' are different, but it is not easy to express the distinction between them. *What they know not* admits some knowledge, though it denies the accuracy and the completeness of it: *what they know* describes such knowledge as thought and use of faculty may give; though from the added word 'naturally,' it is clear that the knowledge is largely of a sensual kind.

Ver. 11. **Woe to them.** This expression is often used by our Lord, but never elsewhere except in Jude and in Revelation. (Paul's use, 'Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel,' is different.) The words may mean, 'Woe is to them,' a description of their miserable condition, present or future, uttered as a warning to others (Calvin); or even 'Alas for them,' expressive of pity (Newcome); or as generally expressive of pain and indignation, a censure and a threat: in any case the word speaks of evil and woe, whether uttered in the tone of compassion which bewails it (Matt. xxiii. 15), or of the indignation that imprecates it (Matt. xi. 21). Here the context favours the idea that it is neither pity nor imprecation, for their sin is strongly condemned, and they are said to have been punished; but a cry of horror on taking in at one glance the whole course of their ungodliness, and its final plunge into the dark abyss (as in Rev. xviii. 16, 19).—**for in the way of Cain have they walked** (so vers. 16 and 18). Like him have they lived, gratifying the passions and selfish instincts of their nature, in contempt of the warnings of God and His word. (Envy of others; murder, literal or figurative—destroying others by their teaching; godlessness, are all more or less inaccurate; it is the character of selfish immoral deceivers that is described.)—**and in the error**; generally a sinful moral fault—a vicious life, that leaves the way of truth (Jas. v. 20; 2 Pet. ii. 18) 'in the error,' *i.e.* in the direction (not by the seduction of Balaam's reward—de Wette—nor into the sin of, but as in the previous clause, 'in the way of') **of Balaam** (of selfish avarice, gratified even in the sin and ruin of others).—**have they run greedily** (the verb means to pour one's self out on, or to give one's self up to a thing).—**in the gainsaying** (the rebellion. See note on Heb. xii. 3) **of Korah**; insurrection against the Lord under cover of right and freedom.—**have they perished.** The beginning, therefore, and the end of their way are illustrated in this threefold history. The

general sins of these apostates have been variously defined, 'envy, covetousness, pride; murder, seduction of others for the sake of gain, rebellion against Divine authority'—all have been used to describe their motives and sins. In all there is this quality predominant, that they knew God and His truth, and their knowledge was perverted by selfishness or covetousness or pride to results eminently immoral and disastrous.

Ver. 12. Here follows a further description of these teachers as set forth in strong figures expressly and earnestly reiterated. **These are they who are sunken rocks**, seen indeed, but their true nature concealed, **in your feasts of charity**. The word for 'rocks' is found only here in the New Testament, though in common Greek writers it is not infrequent in the sense of rocks in or by the sea. The word in 2 Pet. ii. 13, which is like the word used here, means 'spots.' Probably a rock which appears like a spot, and gathers to itself the sea wrack and dirt, explains the connection between the two words. It disturbs the quiet harbour where it is found, and risks the vessels that are near.—**when they feast with you, feeding themselves as they do without fear**, and in contempt of the woe which is pronounced against such shepherds (Isa. lvi. 11; cp. 1 Pet. v. 2, the word for 'feeding' showing that this is the reference).—**clouds without water**, empty, useless, easily carried along therefore by the wind, ostentatious and deceptive wherever they go.—**trees as they are in autumn**, in 'the sear and yellow leaf,' with all their vigour gone, —not because they have borne fruit, for they are **fruitless**, and have ever been so; at their best they had 'leaves only,' and even those are decaying.—**twice dead**, fruitless all along, and now their leaf withereth, and they are **rooted out**; in the soil of the vineyard they have no place, and they are fit only to be thrown away, or to burn.

Ver. 13. They are at once rocks and waves, **wild waves of the sea**, which 'cannot rest,' and throw up only 'mire and dirt' (Isa. lvii. 20). —**foaming out their own shame** — their lusts 'disgraceful.' — **wandering stars** (comets or meteors, not planets), which neither light the world nor guide the mariner, but after blazing awhile drift into 'the blackness and darkness' which is kept ('in reserve') for them, and into which they sink and sink 'for ever.' All that is mischievous, useless, disastrous in sea or land or sky becomes in turn the symbol of the character and the destiny of these bad men. . . . The 'feasts of charity' or of love (Agapæ) spoken of in these verses are not strictly the Lord's Supper, though it is probable that the observance of the Lord's Supper was sometimes connected with them. The historical facts, the use of the pronoun '*your* feasts of love' (ver. 12), and the customs spoken of in 1 Cor. xi., all point to a wider meaning. They seem to have been social gatherings of Christians for promoting kindly feeling and helping the poor. Dr. Lightfoot notes (on 1 Cor. x. 16) that the Jews had meetings of this kind at the close of their Sabbath, and found a sanction for them in Deut. xii. 5, 7, 12, and xiv. 23–29. Pliny and Tertullian both speak of them, and distinguish them from the simple Eucharist, Pliny apparently (x. 97, 98), and Tertullian certainly. In the fourth century the Council of Carthage forbade the holding of them in the churches; and the transference of the Lord's Supper from the evening to the morning originated in part in the abuses to which the blending of the two led.

Ver. 14. Nor is this warning the warning of Jude only. **And to these also** (literally, with respect to these also) **prophesied Enoch the seventh from Adam**, *i.e.* the seventh including Adam; a description added probably to mark his importance by the coincidence of the sacred number seven. To Adam was given the promise of the advent of our Lord as Helper and Saviour; to Enoch, the first promise of the advent of the same Lord as Judge. Jewish writers are ever noting the recurrence of this number. Moses was the seventh from Abraham, Phinehas from Jacob, etc.—**The Lord cometh** (*Greek*, came or has come; describing, as not unfrequently, an occurrence in the midst of which the prophet sees himself standing) **with** (surrounded by) **ten thousands of his holy ones** (literally His holy myriads, the 'innumerable company' of Heb. xii. 22; 'saints' restricts the meaning to saved men).

Ver. 15. **to execute judgment**, *i.e.* to pronounce the doom, and see that it is carried out. Then follows the description of these sinners. The characteristic of the antediluvians, as of those whom Jude addresses, is ungodliness: four times is this quality named, first and last and midst, in the description.—**to convict** (an intensive form of the English verb) in their consciences and before the world. The double meaning of the Greek word is only half represented by 'convince,' and only half by 'convict;' both meanings are in the word, though the second meaning is the predominant one here.—**and of all the hard things**—rough, coarse; used here in its ethical sense, and especially to describe arrogant blasphemy (1 Sam. ii. 3; Mal. iii. 13)—'stout,' the outcome of a hardened heart.

The prophecy here quoted is found almost literally in the Book of Enoch, which was formerly known only in fragments preserved in some of the Fathers, but has recently been discovered in an Ethiopian translation, and became known in Europe at the close of the last century. The book belongs probably to the beginning of the Christian era. Dorner ascribes it to the first century after Christ; Dilmann, who has published it, to the century before. It is really divisible into three parts,—the original book, which includes this prophecy and several other things, and two different sets of additions by later though still early writers. The book contains many absurdities (*e.g.* the women with whom the angels had intercourse brought forth giants six thousand feet high, who first devoured all the produce of the earth, and then began to devour men themselves); and it differs in several particulars from Jude's statements. There is therefore no reason to suppose that Jude quotes it, though the prophecy of Enoch is found (with some important variations, however) in both. Every phrase in the prophecy has its parallel passage in the canonical Scriptures; and this fact may explain the facility and accuracy with which the tradition was transmitted. All, in fact, that is new in this prophecy is that he, Enoch, delivered it—a thing in itself highly probable. Of course the Holy Ghost might have revealed it immediately to Jude; but it may be said, as before,

that this explanation is forbidden by the form and the very purpose of the quotation itself. The writer is appealing to what is already known in support of his argument.

Ver. 16. A further description is now given of these teachers by an enumeration of the qualities by which all may identify them. They are characterized by a chronic discontent with everything and everybody, with their own lot especially—the providence and ways of God, as we should call it; by intense self-indulgence, by proud and self-sufficient speech, and by gross flattery of the prosperous or great whenever anything is to be gained by it. **Murmurers, complainers** of their lot.—**walking ever after their own lusts; and their mouth it speaks great swelling words,** affirming their superiority to all restraints (their freedom, 2 Pet. ii. 18); while their reverence, such as they are capable of, is reserved for the possessors of wealth and influence (**men's persons**, the outside quality, not their true character), and those who are able, and whom they hope to make willing, to help them; and all this in their teaching as well as in their lives. How different from the apostolic type is sufficiently plain (Phil. iv. 11, 12; 1 Tim. vi. 8; Heb. xiii. 5).

Ver. 17. Nor has any new thing happened to you. All this was foreseen and foretold. You yourselves know it; you have only to 'remember the words spoken before by the apostles' (as in Acts xx. 29, 30; 1 Tim. iv. 1, where the evils are *foretold*, as in nearly every Epistle they are *set forth*—the double meaning of 'spoken before'). Most, indeed, of these passages are written, not spoken; but the writing is really the putting into permanent form of what in substance had been orally delivered. The language here used, 'by the apostles,' does not necessarily imply that the writer was not an apostle; but if he had been an apostle, it is more likely he would not have used it. Compare the expression in 2 Pet. iii. 2, 'of us the apostles,' or, as the Revised reading is, 'through your apostles.'

Ver. 18. **how that they told you in the last time there shall be mockers**; only here and in 2 Pet. iii. 3, where it is said that they show their quality in relation to the Second Coming of the Lord.—**walking after the lusts of their ungodlinesses**; each begetting the other; every lust rejecting the Divine that is opposed to it, and the rejection of what is Divine ending ever in aggravated immorality (see Rom. i. 24, 28, 29). The expression here used is no doubt intended to call up the characteristic quality already described in ver. 15.

Ver. 19. Again the deceivers reappear; described not now by historical parallels (ver. 11), not by figures of speech (vers. 12, 13), not by prophetic announcements (vers. 14, 15), not even as their own offensive talk has done (ver. 16), but as they are in their inner nature, and in the influence of that nature on Church life and on themselves.—**These are they that are ever causing divisions** (separations), and will end sooner or later in separating themselves or in ruining the Church. The verb is intensive and continuous. The word 'themselves' goes out, but the idea is still in the verb, though not so prominent as before. Separation is caused in Christian communities by three things: by heretical doctrine, by an unloving, selfish, exacting spirit, and by proud words and an ungodly life; and all three are characteristic of these teachers. So far, therefore, as they are tolerated, they tend to divide and break up the communities to which they belong. Everything they are and everything they have tends to disintegration, and the sooner the Church is rid of them the better. The specific illustrations of this truth in the history of the early sects, and even in the later, are very striking.—**sensual**: we have no English word that expresses the thought of the Greek. The word describes the man in whom the earthly natural life of the soul is supreme, the spiritual, with all its faculties, being subject; and the man himself is ever doing the 'desires of the flesh and of the mind' (Eph. ii. 3). 'Sensual' is too strong, and 'natural' and 'animal' too narrow. 'Soul' (ψυχή), the underlying root of the adjective here used, is the man himself in his natural state. With the soul is connected man's higher nature, the spirit, including the conscience and whatever remains there may be of diviner faculties. The body is the lower nature. He who gives himself up to the body is fleshly; he who by communion with God's Spirit gives himself up to the nobler life, is spiritual. He who thinks only of his own interests, emotions, tastes, is the man whom this verse describes. It is the form of life that finds in itself and in its earthly likings and preferences its law; is sensual even when not fleshly, as were these teachers.—**not having the Spirit.** Their natural religious life, such as it is, is under the unbroken influence either of their flesh or of their lower earthly conceptions. They have neither the law nor the power of the really regenerate man. (Compare 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15; Rom. viii. 9; 1 John iii. 24; Jas. iii. 14, 15.) Without the Spirit, therefore, means, conscience and affections and reason all subject and defiled, even when the flesh is not absolutely supreme.

Vers. 20, 21. **But ye** (strongly emphatic), **beloved**, as against those dividers of the Church who are pulling it down stone by stone, **ever building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.** Every clause is antithetic and suggestive: the overthrow of the Church and of each of its members, and Divine edification;—grace turned into licentiousness, and holy character built on faith;—swelling words of self-sufficiency, no Spirit; and praying in the Spirit;—murmuring, complaining, and denying the Lord that bought them; and keeping yourselves in the love of God, and awaiting the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ;—for whom the blackness of darkness is kept for ever, and waiting for Christ's mercy unto eternal life. Our safety depends on growth in the faith, on prayer in the Spirit, and, after all is done, on receiving the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hereby we keep ourselves, and are kept, in the love which God bears to us, and in the love which we are to bear to Him. The love of God to us, however, is the true origin of all, though not to the exclusion of the Spirit and of Christ, who have each His own part in the great work of our redemption. 'Looking for' may mislead. 'Looking for' is the word found in 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13, and in 1 Thess. i. 10, where it is translated 'waiting for,' and is applied to what after all may never come. The word here really means, espe-

cially in the present tense, 'waiting to receive,' and even 'receiving' itself (Heb. x. 34, xi. 35). It occurs again in Tit. ii. 13, in the same sense as here, 'expecting to receive.'

Vers. 22, 23. Of the false teachers the writer has spoken. Their condition is hopeless (ver. 12). But in the treatment of those who have been exposed to the influence of these ungodly men (ver. 4) great care is needed, and the treatment must vary with the character of each class. The classes are three. **And on some have mercy** (the reading 'rebuke' has not preponderating authority), **being, as they are, in doubt**; the common New Testament meaning of the word (Rom. iv. 20; Jas. i. 6; Matt. xxi. 21). 'Contending, as they do,' is the meaning of the same word in this Epistle (ver. 9), but it is not appropriate here.—**on others**, whose condition may be gathered from the conduct that is to be observed toward them, who have almost yielded to seduction, not through doubt but through fellowship with these false teachers, and partly through their own corrupt taste, and who therefore are to be snatched out of the fire into which they are already entering. Sharp and vigorous interposition is our only hope for them; and if we succeed, their deliverance will be as of 'brands plucked out of the burning' (Amos iv. 11; Zech. iii. 2).—**on others have mercy** (the word is always used in the sense of active compassion, not, therefore, as Luther interprets it, Feel for them; only, Turn aside in fear lest you yourselves share their ruin) **with fear**; a third class, and needing special caution. The disease of the first class, the doubters, is not specially infectious; the condition of the second class is not likely to tempt us—their punishment seems already begun, and we naturally shrink from it, thinking only, moreover, of their need of prompt deliverance; the third class call for watching, and kindly fellowship, which may itself prove dangerous; we are therefore exhorted to attend them **with fear, hating even the garment spotted** (*i.e.* defiled, Jas. iii. 6) **with the flesh**. 'The garment' is the inner one worn next the person, and is itself soiled by the sin. It is therefore a fitting symbol of whatever, by means of external conduct, may make others sharers in the moral destruction we are seeking to avert. Our saving love for sinners must not be suffered to lessen our hatred of sin; and further, we must beware lest through the deceitfulness and the virulence of sin we ourselves, all unconsciously, catch the contagion. The mere contact of garment with garment, of things in themselves indifferent though belonging to the habits and the outward acts of the life, may do mischief. The well-meant attempts of one man to save another, end sometimes in the ruin of both.

Vers. 24, 25. Exhortations to keep themselves in the love of God are fitly followed by a doxology which reminds them that the power and grace are from Him who alone can keep them. **Now to him that is able to guard you** (not the same word as in ver. 21, but a strong military term) **from stumbling** (from every false step, Jas. ii. 10; 2 Pet. i. 10, 'shall never *stumble*'), **and make you to stand without fault** (Rev. xiv. 5, and like the Master Himself, 'without spot,' the same word, Heb. ix. 14) **before the presence of his glory in exceeding joy** (the condition in which you will be found when you stand there), **to the only God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord** (these added words set forth God as Saviour *through Jesus Christ*, Tit. iii. 4–6), **be** (or is) **glory, majesty** (greatness), **dominion and power** (literally, 'might and right,' power and authority), **before all time** ('as it was in the beginning'), **and now** ('is now') **and for evermore** ('and ever shall be'). **Amen** (so *let it be*, or, so *indeed it is*). 'Glory and dominion' are common in the New Testament Doxologies; 'majesty and right' (lawful power) are found only here. 'For evermore' is required in the rendering of what is a strong expression of everlastingness. 'For ever,' 'for evermore,' and 'for ever and evermore,' represent three corresponding expressions in the Greek (*εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*, *εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας*, or *εἰς πάντας τοὺς αἰῶνας*, and *εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων*). All are applied to God, to the blessedness of the righteous, and to the punishment of the wicked. As so applied, they do not materially differ in meaning; but it is important to mark the differences and the intensity of expression.

The whole of this Doxology, so rich and so consolatory, may be a prayer, 'be' glory, as its place at the end of the Epistle and the 'Amen' rather imply; or it may be the assertion of a fact, as in 1 Pet. iv. 11, where the 'Amen' also is used, and the verb 'is' (not 'be') is in the Greek; or we may combine the two meanings by making the Doxology an assertion of what really is, and the Amen a prayer: Be it in human hearts and throughout all creation as it is in truth! How solemn and instructive, that these ascriptions of glory to God are found in connection with judgment as well as with salvation, each, indeed, implying the other, and both illustrating the holiness and the love which we are to adore (Rev. xv. 3, xvi. 5).

INTRODUCTION TO THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN.

IT is impossible within the limits to which this Introduction must be confined, to discuss with anything like appropriate fulness the many deeply interesting and important questions connected with the Revelation of St. John. This is the more to be regretted because, under the influence of a wiser system of interpretation than has often been applied to it, the book has been of late regaining that high position in the mind of the Church to which, from its purpose and character, it is so justly entitled. No book of the Bible has, indeed, since the rise of the recent school of historical criticism, made in this respect such marked and gratifying progress. The disposition to turn away from it as an insoluble enigma has been gradually disappearing; sneers against it are but little heard; and its interpretation has been in great measure rescued from the hands of well-meaning but mistaken theorists. It is curious to think that all this is largely owing to the efforts of those negative critics who have laboured so zealously to discredit the other books of the New Testament. That these critics have had other ends in view than that of establishing the authenticity of any sacred book; that, in particular, they have hoped, by the result of their inquiries upon the point before us, to be more successful in removing the Fourth Gospel from the Canon, is nothing to the purpose. They have at least vindicated with zeal and with acuteness the authenticity of the Apocalypse; and their conclusions regarding it, to some of which we shall immediately advert, have satisfied even the most of those who might otherwise have hesitated, that we have in it a genuine production of 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.' The effect has been in a high degree beneficial. Once satisfied of this, men have felt the importance of earnestly devoting themselves to the interpretation of a work of such marked peculiarities; and, after having made it for centuries the sport of their wildest fancies, they are now settling down to those juster views of its internal characteristics which promise, at no distant date, to produce more harmony in the understanding of its contents than is to be found in the case of any other writing of the New Testament. For these reasons we regret that nothing but a short introduction to the Apocalypse can be attempted here. Believing, as we do, in the preciousness of the inheritance which the Church possesses in it, we should have rejoiced to dwell at some length on the questions to which it has given rise. It will be at once felt, however, that that cannot be, and that we must limit ourselves to as small a space as possible. Omitting all other matter, we propose to speak only of the following points:—The authenticity of the Apocalypse; its general design and character; its structure and plan; and its interpretation.

I.—The Authenticity of the Book.

The first question that meets us is that as to the authenticity of the book. Upon this point Baur expressed his opinion that few writings of the New Testament can

claim evidence for an apostolic origin of a kind so ancient and undoubted (*Krit. Unters. über die Kanon. Evang.* p. 345). Zeller followed in his master's steps, with the declaration that the Apocalypse is the real and normal writing of early Christianity; and that, among all the books of the New Testament, it is the only one which with a certain measure of right may claim to have been composed by an Apostle who had become an immediate disciple of Christ (*Theolog. Jahrb.* 1842, p. 654). In our own country, again, Dr. Davidson thus speaks: 'Enough has been given to prove that the apostolic origin of the Apocalypse is as well attested as that of any other book of the New Testament. How can it be proved that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians, for example, on the basis of external evidence, if it be denied that the Apostle John wrote the closing book of the Canon? With the limited stock of early ecclesiastical literature that survives the wreck of time, we should despair of proving the authenticity of any New Testament book by the help of ancient witnesses, if that of the Apocalypse be rejected' (*Introduction*, 1st ed., i. p. 318). With these testimonies before us from scholars who cannot be suspected of the slightest desire to uphold the traditional views of the Church, it may almost seem unnecessary to say more. Yet some parts of the evidence are in themselves so interesting that it would not be proper wholly to omit them.

This remark may be particularly applied to the evidence of Papias, who is said by Eusebius to have spoken in his book concerning the 'Oracles of the Lord' of a corporeal reign of Christ upon the earth for 1000 years after the resurrection from the dead (*H. E.* iii. 39). It is not, indeed, stated in this passage that the opinion referred to was taken from the Apocalypse, and Papias may have adopted it from some other source. But the probability that he is speaking upon the authority of St. John is in no small degree confirmed by the fact that Andreas and Arethas, two bishops of Cæsarea in the second half of the fifth century, when the work of Papias, now lost, was still in circulation in the Church, distinctly state—the one, that Papias regarded the Apocalypse as worthy of trust; the other, that the same Father had the Apocalypse before him when he wrote (see the passages in *Canonicity*, by Dr. Charteris, pp. 338, 339). No doubt, indeed, would probably have been entertained upon the point had not Eusebius, contrary to his custom, failed to tell us that Papias had the Apocalypse in his eye, and had he not raised the question whether the 'Presbyter John,' with whom Papias had conversed, might not be a different person from the Apostle. The first of these difficulties is easily removed when we remember that Eusebius, a keen anti-millenarian, and one who speaks with contempt of Papias for his millenarian proclivities, could not but be most unwilling to connect such opinions with a sacred book, and that he was himself doubtful whether the Apocalypse ought to be regarded in this light. The second difficulty again would at once disappear were it allowed, as there seems every reason to think is the case, that the Apostle and the 'presbyter' are identical. But even if this cannot be spoken of as established, it is worthy of notice that in another work Eusebius couples the names of Papias and Polycarp of Smyrna together as acknowledged hearers of the Apostle (*Chron. Bipart.*, quoted in *Speaker's Commentary on the New. Test.* iv. p. 408). The conclusion is strengthened by the date of Papias's birth, not later than A.D. 70, and by the scene of his ministry, at no great distance from Ephesus. Another interesting testimony connected with these early times is that of Irenæus. No one disputes the acquaintance of this Father with the book before us, or that he distinctly ascribes it to St. John. The point of importance is that, as we learn from his beautiful letter to Florinus (Routh's *Reliquiæ Sacræ*, i. p. 31), he had been a disciple of Polycarp, and that he delighted in after life to call to mind the accounts which his teacher used to give of his intercourse with the Apostle,—an intercourse so truly transmitted to his

pupils, that Irenæus in describing it speaks, with obvious artlessness, not of eye-witnesses of Jesus, but of eye-witnesses of the 'Word of Life.'

Testimonies such as these are of the highest value, but they are followed by many others of whom, not passing beyond the first half of the third century, we name only Justin Martyr, Melito, Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and the document known as the Muratorian Fragment. It is needless to enlarge. External evidence of a more satisfactory and convincing nature could not be desired. One additional remark, however, may be noted. There is a singularly close connection between the sources of no small portion of the evidence and the district in which the Apostle laboured. Papias was bishop of Hierapolis; Polycarp, so intimately associated with Irenæus, was bishop of Smyrna; Irenæus belonged to Asia Minor; Melito was bishop of Sardis; and Justin Martyr wrote at Ephesus.

The internal evidence confirms the conclusion drawn from the external. It is true that objections to the authenticity of the book are mainly drawn from this source, and these we must immediately consider. But, looking away from them for a moment, it is hardly possible to think that he who in the opening verses names himself 'John' (vers. 4, 9), and who tells us that he was 'in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus' (ver. 9), could be any other than the Apostle. The writer evidently felt that he was entitled to speak to the churches of Asia with an authority which none could question. Antiquity knows of but one John to whom this position can be assigned. The writer had been banished to Patmos for the cause of Christ, and again antiquity speaks only of one of his name who had experienced such a fate. In addition to this, the whole tone and spirit of the book have been justly dwelt upon as being in exact accordance with what we learn from the Gospels of the character of the beloved disciple. The attempt to show that John the presbyter may have been the writer, is now almost universally confessed to be a failure. Even allowing that such a person existed, he cannot have occupied the place in the estimation of the Church which evidently belongs to the author of the Apocalypse, or we should have known more about him. Nor is it less difficult to explain that, if he wrote the Apocalypse, there should be nowhere the slightest hint of his banishment to Patmos.

Upon the allegation that some one wrote the book who only pretended to be the Apostle and assumed his name, it is unnecessary to dwell. The supposition is as destitute of probability as of proof; and the only conclusion warranted by the whole body both of external and of internal evidence is, that no other John can be thought of as its author but he to whom the Church has so unanimously and invariably ascribed the work.

There is, indeed, one branch of internal evidence upon which great reliance has been and is still placed by many for the purpose of establishing the opposite conclusion. It is urged that those who ascribe the Fourth Gospel to the Apostle John cannot possibly believe him to be also the author of the Apocalypse. We have already in this Commentary declared and defended our belief in the Johannine origin of the one (vol. ii. *Introduction to the Gospel according to John*); we have now to show that this is consistent with a similar belief as to the other. The argument is that a comparison of the two books betrays such an essential difference between them, as to prove that they cannot have proceeded from the same pen. How far, we have now to ask, is this the case? The following particulars may be noted:—

(1.) In the Gospel St. John does not name himself; in the Apocalypse he does. The difference is sufficiently explained by the difference of the books—the one his

torical, intended to bring forward the Redeemer, and to keep the writer out of view; the other prophetic, and needing, after the manner of the Old Testament prophets, a distinct naming of the author as a voucher for the marvellous revelations granted him. In particular, how often do we read in the Book of Daniel, so largely used in the Apocalypse, the words 'I Daniel' (chaps. vii. 15, viii. 27, etc.); why not also in the Apocalypse: 'I John'?

(2.) The author, it is said, instead of calling himself an Apostle, only calls himself a 'servant' of Christ (chap. i. 1). But the other Apostles frequently name themselves in a similar way—St. Paul (Rom. i. 1; 2 Cor. iv. 5; Gal. i. 10; Tit. i. 1), St. James (chap. i. 1), St. Jude (ver. 1). Besides which, it may be truly said that St. John in the Apocalypse is writing less as an Apostle, whose word no one might despise, than as the 'brother' of all persecuted saints; a 'partaker with them in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus' (chap. i. 9). He was a suffering member of Christ's body; so were they. In the furnace of affliction all had been welded into one.

(3.) Again, the writer speaks of the wall of the New Jerusalem as having 'twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb' (chap. xxi. 14); and such language, it is urged, is inconsistent with the humility which an Apostle would have displayed. But the words are no more than an exact echo of those of St. Paul when he tells us that Christians are 'built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets' (Eph. ii. 20); they express a fact borne witness to by our Lord's selection of the Twelve to be the first proclaimers of His kingdom; and no one who recalls the light in which the 'Lamb' is always set before us in the Apocalypse, can for a moment doubt that the glory of the Apostles of whom the writer speaks did not lie in anything in themselves, but in the fact that they were 'Apostles *of the Lamb*.'

The above objections are trifling. We turn to one or two of a more important character, drawn from the language, the spirit, and the teaching of the book.

(1.) The language and style. That these are confessedly so different from the language and style of the other Johannine writings contained in the New Testament, has constituted a difficulty from very early times. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria in the middle of the third century, and a pupil of Origen, dwelt upon them with an acuteness which has not been surpassed by any later critic; and it can hardly be alleged that down to the present hour the difference has been satisfactorily explained. The idea of some, that it is due to a certain harshness and roughness of expression which comes with later years, is at once to be set aside as not sufficiently supported by the general experience of literary men. Equally untenable is the supposition that the difference is to be accounted for by an increased familiarity with the Greek tongue, gained during a long residence at Ephesus; for, even granting that the Apocalypse was written twenty-five years before the Gospel, its peculiarities of style are not such as spring from a writer's ignorance of the language in which he writes. More than to either of these explanations must we resort to that which would trace the difference in some cases to design, in others to imitation of the Old Testament Prophets. The student of the original will at least easily mark that those solecisms of grammatical construction which so often startle him are by no means carried through the book. In the case of the very particulars for which he is blamed, the writer shows by numerous instances that he is as well acquainted with the Greek language as his critics, and he forces on us the impression that he has adopted the anomalies complained of because, for one reason or another, he thought them adapted to his aim. They cannot, therefore, when compared with the easy sentences of his Gospel and Epistles, form a sufficient ground for denying identity of authorship.

On the other hand, it is impossible to compare the different writings of which we speak without coming into contact at almost every step with something or other that takes us directly to the Gospel or Epistles of St. John. Many of the favourite words of the latter books, such as 'to give,' to 'witness,' to 'tabernacle,' 'to keep,' 'to overcome,' 'name' as the expression of character, 'true' in the sense of real, meet us in the Apocalypse in a way found in no other book of the New Testament, while the figurative language employed has not unfrequently its germ in such figures as those of hungering and thirsting, of the manna and the living water, of the shepherd and the sheep, which are so familiar to us in the Gospel.

(2.) Similar remarks apply to the tone and spirit of the Apocalypse, as compared with those of the Fourth Gospel. Instead of a difference here, we venture rather to assert that no two books of the New Testament more closely resemble one another in these respects than the two in question. The contrary impression has arisen from mistaking the real character of the Gospel. That that Gospel is in one of its parts—chaps. xiii.–xvii.—full of a blessed calm is undoubtedly the case; but the chapters now referred to do not constitute its most characteristic part. Its main section is that which extends from chap. v. to chap. xii. (see Introd. to the Gospel in this Commentary, ii. p. xxvii.); and this, so far from being calm, contains the most severe and sustained polemic against 'the Jews' to be found in any of the Gospels. There, if anywhere, we meet the Redeemer of the world in the very character in which He appears in the Apocalypse, the Prophet of righteousness, the unsparing Exposer of sin, the Judge of men. On the other hand, nothing can exceed the tenderness and soft and gentle beauty of many parts of the Apocalypse, such as chaps. vii. 9–17, xiv. 1–5, xix. 5–10, xxi. 10–27. The more the two books are compared with one another, the more will the groundlessness of the objection which we are now considering appear.

(3.) But if this may be said of the tone and spirit of the Apocalypse when compared with the Gospel, it may certainly be said (to at least an equal extent) of its teaching. On all the most important doctrines of the New Testament nothing could be more complete than the harmony between the two books. More especially may this be seen in their teaching regarding the Person, the Death, and the Resurrection of our Lord, or regarding the moral freedom and the final destiny of man. This resemblance, too, is the more striking when we observe that it may be traced not simply in regard to the substance of these great doctrines, but in regard to certain aspects of them which are brought out in at least a similar way in no other part of the New Testament. Thus, as to the Person of our Lord, it is in both of them that He is so distinctively set before us as the 'Word of God' and as the 'Lamb.' His death and resurrection, again, are combined in the two, as both essential parts of one thought, with a closeness hardly met with elsewhere (comp. *e.g.* John x. 17 with Rev. i. 18). The remarkable prominence given in the Gospel, by the use of the verb 'to will,' to the freedom and responsibility of man (chaps. v. 6, 35, 40, vi. 21, 67, vii. 17, viii. 44, ix. 27, xii. 21) meets us also in the Apocalypse (chaps. ii. 21, xi. 5, 6, xxii. 17); while at the same time there is combined with this in both the no less singular fact that they appear to speak of men as if from the first they were divided into two great classes, from the one of which there is no transition to the other. Lastly, the final destiny of man is set before us in both books in a manner that may be spoken of as peculiar to them, for in both the righteous are already judged, and have no part in the general judgment, which awaits the wicked (John v. 24; comp. Rev. xx. 4, 11–15; and on this latter passage see Commentary). Our space does not permit us to enlarge upon these topics. We must content ourselves with urging that an impartial estimate of the doctrinal teaching of the two books before us will result in the conviction not only

that they are in harmony with one another, but that they are so even when they present the truth in aspects of it found nowhere else.[1]

These considerations show that the argument against the Johannine origin of the Apocalypse, if the Fourth Gospel be accepted as Johannine, is destitute of any real foundation. There is something on the surface to favour it; there is far more beneath the surface to discredit and disprove it.

One other point ought to be noticed. The attempt has been made by several writers, most recently by Keim (*Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, i. p. 217, etc., Engl. transl.), to show that St. John cannot be the author of the Apocalypse, because he had never any connection either with Ephesus or with Asia Minor, and because in fact he, as well as all the other Apostles, had died before the destruction of Jerusalem. Could the premiss be established, the conclusion would almost inevitably follow. So intimately is the book associated with the churches of Asia, so directly do the early Fathers who ascribe it to the Apostle ascribe it to him in his supposed connection with that district, that if this latter opinion be a mistake the whole tradition of the early Christian Church can hardly escape being set aside as unworthy of reliance. A few words, therefore, upon this latest phase of the controversy seem to be required.

The texts supposed to prove the death of St. John before the destruction of Jerusalem are Luke ix. 49 sq., 51 sqq., Mark iii. 17, ix. 38 sqq., to which are added, as showing that all the Apostles were dead before the Apocalypse was written, Rev. xviii. 20, xxi. 14. We can only recommend our readers to compare these texts with the conclusions drawn from them, that they may judge for themselves how flimsy are the foundations upon which not a little of that modern criticism rests which is so eagerly opposed to the traditions of the Church. The argument against any connection between St. John and Ephesus is more elaborate. It depends partly upon the statement that there is no mention of such a connection in several of those early documents in which we might naturally have looked for it, and partly on the endeavour to prove that Irenæus, our chief authority upon the point, was led, 'under the combined influences of misunderstanding and of the necessities of the times,' to confound the 'Presbyter John,' of whom we have already spoken, with the far more important John the Apostle. It was of the former, not the latter, that Irenæus had, while yet a boy, heard many memorable things from Polycarp; the former, not the latter, had been the 'Lord's disciple,' had succeeded to the sphere of St. Paul's labours in Asia Minor, had lived in Ephesus, had written the Revelation and the Gospel, and had died at a very great age in the reign of the Emperor Trajan. The first part of the argument obviously proves nothing. We have no right to fix beforehand what a writer is bound to say; and if we are to reject as false any statement of antiquity simply because, in the scanty remains of early ecclesiastical literature which have come down to us, some fragments may be discovered which do not mention it, there will be little left us to believe. The second part of the argument, relating to the supposed mistake of Irenæus, has not even a shadow of probability to recommend it. It is inconsistent with the language of that Father when, in his letter to Florinus, he dwells with pathetic force upon the distinctness with which the events of youth impress themselves upon the memory. It is not less inconsistent with the fact that this supposed mistake of Irenæus does not obtain the slightest support from any writer of the Church during the first 1700 years of her existence. It elevates into a great historical reality a presbyter of whom, if he ever existed, we know nothing but the name. And finally, it is at variance with one of the earliest, most continuous,

[1] We venture to refer, for a fuller exposition of some of these points than can be attempted here, to two articles by the present writer in the *Contemporary Review* for August and September 1871.

and best authenticated traditions of the early Christian age. The connection of St. John with Asia and Ephesus, it is true, is not alluded to in the Acts of the Apostles or in the Epistles of St. Paul, because in all probability it did not begin until these books had been penned; but it is spoken of by a succession of ancient Christian writers, some of whom, from their official position in Ephesus itself, had the very best opportunities of being accurately informed; others of whom are our chief authorities for many of the most important facts of Christian antiquity. We refer to Apollonius, presbyter of Ephesus as early as the middle of the second century; to Irenæus, to Polycrates bishop of Ephesus, to Clement of Alexandria, to Origen, and to the historian Eusebius. There is no need to speak of others. Upon few things, not mentioned in Scripture, can we rely with greater confidence than upon this, that the Apostle John was the head of the churches of Asia Minor before his exile to Patmos, and that after his deliverance from exile he returned to Ephesus, where he died.

From all that has been said it will, we trust, be manifest to our readers that the arguments, drawn chiefly from internal considerations, against the authorship of the Apocalypse by the Apostle John, are insufficient to shake the clear and decided testimony of antiquity, that the 'John' who speaks in it is no other than he is acknowledged to be by nearly all critics of the New Testament, including the most eminent of modern times, even the John who 'leaned upon the Lord's breast at supper.'

II.—Date and Place of Writing.

The inquiry as to the date at which the Apocalypse was composed is attended with considerable difficulty. Not, indeed, that the external evidence upon the point is again either defective or ambiguous, for there is no question of New Testament criticism in regard to which we have clearer or more definite statements from a very early period. But the internal evidence appears at first sight to conflict with the external; while, at the same time, it is thought by many to be so decisive that they are able to fix not only the year, but the very month and day upon which the writer beheld, if he did not also publish, his visions. Putting aside lesser and more unimportant differences of opinion, the main question is whether we are to assign the book to an early or a late date. Was it penned before the destruction of Jerusalem, in that case about A.D. 68; or does it belong to the close of the reign of Domitian, about A.D. 95 or 96? The latter view, which was universally prevalent in the Church from the earliest down to the most recent times, is founded chiefly upon a passage of Irenæus in which that Father, in the Greek text preserved by Eusebius (*H. E.* v. 8), says that the Apocalypse 'was seen by the Apostle no long time ago, but almost in our own generation, about the end of the reign of Domitian.' It is unnecessary to consider attempts that have been made to find in this passage another subject for the verb 'was seen' than 'the Apocalypse,' spoken of immediately before. The meaning of the statement is simply indisputable; and we must either accept it, or allow (what may certainly have happened) that Irenæus was mistaken. But Irenæus was not likely to be mistaken. We have already had occasion to notice his intimate relations with Polycarp, the disciple of St. John himself; and the fact of the late date mentioned by him, one which in his opinion tended to explain the mysterious nature of the allusion to the number of the beast in chap. xiii. 18 about which he was writing at the time, was a fact which he would certainly not regard with either indifference or carelessness. Not only, however, is this the case. The opinion of Irenæus was held also by Eusebius, who distinctly connects the banishment of St. John to Patmos with the time of Domitian, who even expressly mentions the fifteenth

year of that emperor's reign as the time (*H. E.* iii. 18, comp. iii. 20), and who appears to depend for his authorities not on Irenæus only, but on 'the ancients' (*H. E.* iii. 20). The testimonies of not a few of these 'ancients,' indeed, still survive, as of Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Victorinus bishop of Pettau in Pannonia (see them in *Canonicity*, by Dr. Charteris); and, although they cannot be spoken of as equally distinct with that of Irenæus, they are yet sufficient to show what was the accepted belief of the early Church in parts of the world distant from one another, and therefore likely to have received their information from independent sources.

Various considerations may be mentioned favourable to this conclusion. Thus the persecution under Domitian appears to have been much more widespread than that under Nero, by whom St. John must have been banished if the earlier date of the Apocalypse be correct. In this way it would be more likely to reach the Apostle, whom we have no means of connecting with Rome at the time, and who was in all probability far distant from that city. Again, there is evidence that under Domitian banishment was 'a usual punishment' (*Speaker's Commentary on the New Test.* iv. p. 431), while evidence of a similar kind is wanting in the case of Nero. And, once more, the fact that the Apocalypse is addressed to the churches of Asia Minor agrees much better with the idea that it was written late in the Apostle's life, than that it was written at a time when we have no proof whatever, but rather the reverse, that he was connected with that region of the Church. The last-mentioned consideration seems to us, indeed, worthy of more serious attention than, so far as we know, it has received. The point is this. The Apocalypse itself presupposes in its first three chapters an intimate connection between the writer and the Asiatic churches,—a connection, too, which it is hardly possible to think of in any other light than as one of affectionate authority on the side of the former, and of willing acknowledgment of such authority on the side of the latter. Besides which it is not to be forgotten that all the most important evidence for the authenticity of the book is so closely bound up with a belief in the connection spoken of, that, if this part of it be unworthy of trust, little dependence can be placed on any of its other parts. When, then, was the connection established? Certainly not before A.D. 62, for the Epistle to the Ephesians was written about that date; and, in conformity with his settled rule of action, St. Paul would neither have laboured in Ephesus, nor have written to Christians there, had St. John already established himself in that city (Rom. xv. 20). Nor could the connection have been formed between A.D. 62 and A.D. 68. The interval is too short to have produced the results belonging to it. Of the years after A.D. 68 it is unnecessary to speak. No one who rejects the late date thinks of any year immediately or shortly subsequent to the fall of Jerusalem. The force of this consideration ought surely to be more acknowledged than it has been by those who think that the Apostle did not leave the holy city till the very eve of its destruction. But critics of the negative school who maintain the authenticity of the Apocalypse ought equally to feel it. In exact proportion as they imagine St. John to have been animated by a narrow Judaic instead of a wide Christian spirit, must they allow that he could hardly, before the fall of Jerusalem, have extended his interest and his sphere of action, as he must have done before he could write the first three chapters of the Apocalypse. Nothing is more unlikely than that as early as A.D. 68 a person, animated by a spirit so exclusively Judaic as that attributed to the Apostle, should have formed such ties to churches in a Gentile land, and composed very largely at least of Gentile converts, as to lead him to select seven of them to be representatives of the one universal Church of Christ.

It has, indeed, been sometimes urged that the voice of antiquity is not so much in

favour of a late date for the Apocalypse as might be supposed from the above remarks. Theophylact has been quoted for the statement that St. John was an exile in Patmos thirty-two years after the Ascension, and that there and then he wrote his Gospel. Even though this statement were correct, it would not follow that the Apocalypse was written at the same time. We only learn from it that Theophylact believed the exile to have taken place under Nero. But the grounds upon which he rested his belief are not given; and, in their absence, it is sufficient to say that a writer who lived at the close of the eleventh century has no authoritative voice in an inquiry of this kind. Again, the statement that St. John was banished under Nero is found in the preface to one edition of the Syriac version of the New Testament; but this preface is generally supposed to belong to the sixth century, and is thus, not less than the statement of Theophylact, destitute of any peculiar weight. Finally, it is hardly necessary to allude to the statement of a treatise, professing to be the production of Dorotheus bishop of Tyre, but also ascribed by later scholars to the sixth century, that the Apostle was exiled under Trajan. Apart from the date to which the statement belongs, it is in itself so chronologically improbable, as well as so much at variance with all the other evidence of antiquity upon the point, that no importance whatever can be attached to it.

In the circumstances now mentioned it is obviously unfair to speak of the 'absence of external evidence' (Davidson, *Introd.* vol. i. p. 348, 1st ed.). More definite and clear evidence of that kind it would not be easy to imagine. If any other conclusion than that which asserts the late date of the book before us is to be adopted, it must rest upon overpowering evidence supplied by its own contents.

Such evidence, it is not to be denied, is supposed by the greater number of modern inquirers to exist. Not only scholars of the negative school, but many writers of the present day, eminently distinguished both for sobriety and reverence of spirit, accept it as decisive. Some consideration therefore must be devoted to this point. The evidence relied on may be said to resolve itself into two branches, the interpretation of particular texts, and the general character of the contents and style of the book.

As to the first of these, it is urged by Hilgenfeld that passages such as chaps. vi. 9, 11, xvi. 6, xvii. 6, xviii. 24, xix. 2, refer to the persecution of the Christians by Nero (*Einl.* p. 447); but a moment's attention to them is sufficient to show that they are equally applicable to any persecution of Christians whatsoever, and that there is absolutely nothing to connect them with Nero rather than Domitian. Chap. xi. 1, 2 is confidently referred to as showing, partly, that the temple must still have been in existence when the words were written; partly, that the Jewish war which began A.D. 66 must then have been in progress, inasmuch as the writer expects that Jerusalem and the outer court of the temple will be destroyed by the heathen. It is sufficient to reply that the inferences can be accepted only on two suppositions, both of which are certainly incorrect. First, that certain parts of the prophecy, the measuring reed and the measuring, the two olive trees, the two candlesticks, and the beast, are symbolical; but that the temple, the altar, the court, the holy city trodden under foot by the Gentiles, the 42 months and the 1260 days, are literal (Macdonald, *Life of St. John*, p. 159). We have not space to discuss these matters in detail. It is obvious that a line of distinction, thus arbitrarily drawn between what is literal and what is symbolical, leaves it in the power of an interpreter to make anything that he pleases of the prophecy. Besides which the prophecy was not upon this view fulfilled. Jerusalem was not trodden under foot of the Gentiles from the moment when 'Vespasian appears to have received his commission from Nero,' but from the moment when the city was

taken; and it is no sufficient answer to the non-fulfilment of other parts that we have here 'an example of a prophecy which contains at the same time the only history or notice of the events by which it was fulfilled.' The measuring, too, upon the view now combated, must be understood of destruction, whereas the analogy of the Old Testament requires that we refer it to preservation. The truth is that the whole passage is symbolical, and that, as we shall endeavour to show in the Commentary, the symbolism is founded not on the thought of the Herodian temple at all, but on that of the tabernacle (see on chap. xi. 1, 19). Be the foundation of the symbolism, however, what it may, the writer has manifestly in his eye the spiritual temple, the true Church of Christ, which was to be preserved while all false professors were to be cast out. The second unfounded supposition upon which the view that we are now combating proceeds is, that the writer, a fanatical Jewish-Christian, anticipated in the very first stage of the Jewish war the fate here spoken of for the greater portion of the temple buildings and for the holy city. He could not have done so. If uttering only his own expectations he could have entertained no idea but one,—that the Almighty would yet, as He had often done before, interfere on behalf of His ancient people, and guard the Zion which He loved. Or if, as is rendered probable by a comparison of Rev. xi. 2 with Luke xxi. 24, he was proceeding upon the prophecy of Christ, how could he shut his eyes to the fact that, at a moment when all the buildings of the temple were before Him (Matt. xxiv. 2), our Lord had said, 'the days will come, in which there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down'? (Luke xxi. 6). The words of chap. xi. 1, 2 cannot be referred to the literal temple, without throwing the interpretation of the whole Apocalypse into confusion.

Still more importance is attached, by those who argue for an early date from individual texts, to chap. xiii. 1 compared with chap. xvii. 10, 11, the general view of these verses (though the differences of different commentators are far from slight) being that the heads of the beast spoken of are emperors of Rome, that the head which was wounded to death, but whose deadly wound was healed, is Nero, about in popular expectation to return from the grave; and that, as the head which 'is' is either Galba or Vespasian, we may conclude with unerring certainty that the Apocalypse was written in the latter half of A.D. 68, or at least not later than the spring of A.D. 69 or 70. Düsterdieck even goes so far as to fix upon Easter day of A.D. 70, pre-eminently the 'Lord's day' of the year, as that when the apocalyptic visions were beheld (*Die Offenbarung, Einl.* p. 53). A full answer to such conjectures can only be given after the passages referred to have been studied. It must be enough in the meantime to reply that the argument proceeds upon what we have endeavoured to show in the Commentary is a mistaken supposition, that the 'kings' spoken of are individuals, not national powers, and that the Seer expected the return of Nero from the dead to take vengeance upon Rome. Let the false exegesis involved in these conclusions be abandoned, and it will be seen that there is nothing in the passages before us inconsistent with the idea of the later date. As has been well said by Dean Alford, 'Those whose view of the prophecy extends wider, and who attach a larger meaning to the symbols of the beast and his image and his heads, will not be induced by such very uncertain speculations to set aside a primitive and, as it appears to them, a thoroughly trustworthy tradition' (*Prol. to Rev.* § 2, 26).

Turning now from individual texts to general contents and style, it is urged that had Jerusalem been destroyed before the Apocalypse was written, the writer could not have failed to notice that event. To what end, we may ask, should he have specifically noticed it? He is not writing history, either past or future. He is gathering the general lesson taught by all history, by all the dealings of God, alike

with His Church and her foes, both in previous ages and in his own time. The fall of Egypt or Nineveh or Babylon was equally suited to his purpose, but he makes no express mention of any of these catastrophes. He remembers them, he has them in many an incidental allusion distinctly before his eye, but he does not notice them as particular events, and he is satisfied with unfolding that principle of God's dealings which their fall expresses. A similar remark may be made in regard to the destruction of Jerusalem. Nay, more. May we not venture to say that the book rather presupposes this destruction? It describes a state of things of which judgment upon Judaism is a leading feature. Not, indeed, that judgment falls upon Judaism regarded as distinct from heathenism, but the idea underlies the whole book that a degenerate Judaism is the emblem of all opposition to the truth, and that as such it is specially doomed to the judgments of the Almighty. Now it is one of the most marked characteristics of the Apocalypse that the writer proceeds upon facts, only catching their deep general significance, and extending and spiritualising them. Whence, then, did he gain the idea of the holy city being trodden under foot of the Gentiles (chap. xi. 2); whence, still more, the idea of Babylon, the same as false Jerusalem, being burned (chap. xviii. 9)? No answer can well be given, except that it was from the destruction of Jerusalem. That terrible scene of desolation is present to his mind. He seems to 'stand afar off,' and to see 'the smoke of the city's burning.' The thought of it supplies him with some of his most terrible imagery; and, in the judgment executed upon her, he beholds the pledge and the type of that still wider judgment which shall be immediately accomplished upon all the enemies of God by Him who cometh quickly.

Once more, it is urged with no small degree of plausibility that both the style and tone of thought in the Apocalypse lead to the impression that it must belong to the earlier rather than the later period of the Apostle's life. Of the first of these two points we have already spoken, and we can now only repeat that a space of twenty-seven years spent in Ephesus, where the Greek tongue would be more used than in Jerusalem, offers no adequate explanation of the peculiar style of the book before us. Its solecisms are not such as proceed from ignorance of the Greek language, and they would not have been removed by greater familiarity with it. However we may attempt to account for them, they are obviously designed, and rather imply a more accurate knowledge of the grammatical forms from which they are intentional departures. At the same time, there are passages in the book (as, for example, chap. xviii.) which, in their unsurpassed and unsurpassable eloquence exhibit a command of the Greek tongue on the part of the writer that long familiarity with it would best explain, were explanation necessary. As to the second of the two points above alluded to, there is no reason to think that the heat and fire which appear in the tone of thought belonged only to the Apostle's youth. We know, indeed, that the contrary was the case. The stories handed down to us, such as that of St. John and the young robber, connected as they are with the later period of his life, show that to its very end there burned in him the same fervour of passion which would have called down fire upon the Samaritan village; and, in the prefatory remarks to the Fourth Gospel in this Commentary, we have already called attention to the fact that that Gospel, belonging by the acknowledgment of all who receive it to St. John's closing days, reveals a tone of thought which emphatically marks its writer as a 'son of thunder' (*Introduction*, p. xv.). Finally, if it be said that the Jewish imagery of the Apocalypse belongs more naturally to St. John's earlier than to his later years, it ought not to be forgotten that by no writer of the New Testament does the intimate connection between Judaism and Christianity seem to have been so deeply felt. To

the very last, the key-note of the whole Christian system was contained for him in the Saviour's words, 'Salvation is of the Jews' (John iv. 22). Jesus was not a new light; He was only the fulness of the light which had partially shone in prophecy (John i. 8, 9); He was not simply the Son of God, He was the King of *Israel* (John i. 49). Old Testament thoughts and figures appear with remarkable copiousness throughout the Fourth Gospel; and the use of them in the Apocalypse is not greater than admits of easy explanation, by thinking of the prophetic nature of the book and of the class of literature to which it belongs.

Reviewing the whole question of date, it appears to us that the internal evidence supposed to be in favour of an early date is not sufficient to overthrow the strong and clear external evidence in favour of a late one. We allow at once that were it not for the latter the book would naturally produce the impression that it belonged to the first period of St. John's life rather than its last. Yet a mere impression of this kind might, it will be allowed, be easily enough wrong; and when we are once led by any evidence to incline towards the opposite conclusion, it is not difficult to see in the book itself much that favours it. Notwithstanding, therefore, the current opinion to the contrary, we must express our conviction that the exile in Patmos and the composition of the Apocalypse belong to the reign of Domitian, not of Nero; and consequently, when the statements of Irenæus and Eusebius are taken into account, to the year A.D. 95 or 96.

Little need be said as to the *place* where the Apocalypse was written. On the supposition, every way probable notwithstanding the doubts of some recent critics, that St. John returned to Ephesus after his banishment, the question can only lie between this city and Patmos itself. The past tenses used in chap. i., 'gave,' 'sent,' 'was,' etc., are distinctly in favour of the former, and we conclude therefore that our book was written at Ephesus.

III.—Design and General Characteristics.

Having spoken of the authorship and date of the Apocalypse, as well as of the place where it was written, it will now be proper to turn more directly to the book itself, with the view of gathering from it one or two particulars as to the author's design and the general characteristics that mark his work. These particulars are of importance in helping us to understand him, and they are intimately connected with the views of his meaning taken in the following Commentary.

1. Of the design it will not be necessary to say much. It is to encourage and strengthen the Church during the period which was to elapse between the close of direct revelation and the second coming of her Lord. That period had been described by Jesus Himself, especially in His last discourses, as one of great difficulty and trial to His people. He had indicated to them in the plainest manner, and in many a different form of expression, that they would not then enjoy prosperity and ease. On the contrary, the sufferings which He had experienced would be repeated in the experience of all the members of His Body. The Bridegroom would be taken away from the children of the bridechamber, and they who were thus deprived of Him would fast in those days. They would have to contend both with outward persecution and with inward degeneracy and apostasy. Men's hearts would faint for fear, and for expectation of the things that were coming on the earth. The very powers of heaven would be shaken. The Book of Revelation, then, was designed to cheer and animate the Church through these days of darkness, and to point out to her more clearly than had yet been done the nature of the position she was to

maintain, of the contest she was to wage, of the sufferings she was to endure, of the triumphs she was to win, and of the glorious inheritance that was to be bestowed upon her at the last. It was to let her know that she had not been launched upon an ocean of unanticipated trials, but that all had been foreseen by her Divine and watchful Guardian, and that she might rest in the assurance that, followed by the eye of Him who holdeth the winds in the hollow of His hand, she would in due time be brought into her desired haven. In particular, the ultimate theme of the book is the return of the Saviour, and His receiving His people to Himself, that where He is there they may be also. 'Yea: I come quickly,' is the voice that runs through it: 'Amen: come, Lord Jesus,' is the answer which it is intended to awaken in the believing heart. This general object has been recognised by all interpreters, and it need only be added more distinctly that it was not a local or a temporary one. It must, of course, be at once allowed that the book had a special application to those in whose hands it was first placed, and that the peculiar circumstances of Christians at the time when it was written determined both its object and its imagery. The same thing has to be said of all the other books of the New Testament. But in the case of none of them is the universal reference so clear as in that of the Apocalypse. No competent inquirer will deny that the seven churches of Asia represent the universal Church. The apostle, too, did not know when the end would be; and he could not have forgotten the words in which Christ Himself had said, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father hath appointed by His own authority' (Acts i. 7). As he looked abroad, therefore, upon the trials of the Church in his own day, and beheld trial continuing to be her portion in this world to the end, it could not be otherwise than his design to supply her with comfort as abiding as her sorrow. To whatever extent he would first of all instruct and console the Christians around him under trials that may have been peculiar to them, it is impossible not to allow that he desired to supply instruction and consolation in equal measure to Christians under other trials and in other days.

2. Turning from the design to the general nature of the book, what has been said may prepare us for some of those characteristics of it which must be fixed distinctly in our minds, if we would either comprehend its meaning or render to it that justice which it has been so frequently refused.

(1.) *It is a book which deals with principles rather than with particular events.* The same remark, indeed, is applicable to all the prophetic books of Scripture, for these are for the most part occupied with principles that are generally, even universally, fulfilling themselves in human life. They were written to call men's attention, not so much to the mode in which at some remote point of time events then to happen would embody their fulfilment, as to direct them to that scheme of the Divine working which continually reappears in history. They are a proclamation of eternal truths,—of the sovereignty of God, of His superintendence of the world, of His approbation of good, of His hatred of evil, of the fact that, notwithstanding all the apparent anomalies around us, He is conducting to final triumph His own plan for the establishment of His righteous and perfect kingdom. To have clothed such truths in language corresponding in minute details with particular incidents of the future, would have deprived them of their most important characteristic, would have exhausted their meaning in one fulfilment, and would have weakened the force of those lessons which they have for all ages and all circumstances. It is well, therefore, that prophecy should be uttered to a large extent in general language. No doubt the difficulty of applying it with universal consent to special incidents is thus increased. The men of one age see it fulfilled in what is passing around them; the

men of another age do the same; till, in almost exact proportion as ages increase in number, interpretations multiply. Then the scorner cries, Behold the folly of endeavouring to interpret prophecy at all; each interpreter has his own interpretation; and, as these interpretations cannot all be true, the probability is that all of them are false, and that the decision of the question is beyond our reach. No language can be more mistaken. In a certain sense each of the interpreters spoken of was right. He was right in seeing the events of his own day unfold themselves in a manner corresponding to the prophecy; and had he merely said, Here is a fulfilment of it, he would have been able to justify his conclusion. His error lay in saying, Here is *the* fulfilment, as if no other fulfilment had ever been or were to be.

These remarks, applicable to all prophecy, apply with peculiar force to the Revelation of St. John. It is a book in which the general principles of good and evil, together with the judgments of God that follow them, are set in the most direct opposition to each other. The struggle between these two principles marks all time. It returns in every age, and God is always the same God of judgment. So far, then, as is consistent with fair interpretation, we must desire to see the prophecies of this book fulfilling themselves continually, and, as the struggle between good and evil deepens, in continually increasing degree. This, however, we could not do, did they not possess that generality of character which is so closely connected with a figurative style. A definite disclosure of names and years would have brought them into relation with one period alone.

(2.) *The figurative and symbolical style of the Apocalypse is intimately associated with the position, the training, the habits, and the purpose of the writer.* The Apostle had been a Jew, in all the noblest elements of Judaism a Jew to the very core. We know it from what is told us of his history in the Gospels; we know it not less from numerous little marks which stamp the Fourth Gospel, penned by him, as one of the most genuine productions of a Jewish mind. It is true, no doubt, that we do not meet in that Gospel such figures as we meet in the Apocalypse. The difference is easily explained. In the former, St. John was writing narrative and describing fact. In the latter, he is looking with prophetic eye into the future; and what more natural than that, when he does so, he should adopt the method and the style of those old Prophets whose work had been the glory of his nation, and whose words had fed the loftiest and brightest hopes of his own heart? We may expect that everything written by him from such a point of view will breathe the very essence of Old Testament prophecy, will be moulded by its spirit, be at home amidst its pictures, and be familiar with its words. Why consider this inexplicable? Why deny to a Christian Apostle the right of clothing his ideas in forms of speech sanctified to him by all that was best in the past history of his people, and, may we not hope, also sanctified to us? We do not make it an objection to Isaiah, or Ezekiel, or Daniel, or Zechariah, that they adopted in their communications with men the style which they actually employed. Yet the contents of their prophecies are substantially the same as the contents of that before us—an old and sinful world going down that a new and better world may take its place; the hatefulness, the danger, and the punishment of sin contrasted with the beauty, the security, and the reward of righteousness; the ever-present, though unseen, Ruler of the universe watching over His own, making even the wrath of man to praise Him, and guiding all things towards His own glorious issues. How could one who had fired his soul amidst these pictures of earlier days until he was 'weary with forbearing and could not stay;' who knew that man was the same and God the same in every age; who looked into the future and saw in it, under the light of the Incarnation, not a time entirely

different from what had been, but the fulness of what had long since begun, the culmination of ages that had gone before,—fail to speak in the tones most familiar to him when he spoke upon such subjects? Or how could he fail to behold the world through the medium of figures that had till then had complete possession of his thoughts? These very figures of the Apocalypse, the symbols that it employs, the language that it speaks, are a testimony to the thorough reality of the writer, to the depth of his convictions, and to the profoundness of the emotions with which his soul was stirred. Then, again, we ought to remember that he was addressing persons familiar with his style of thought. The Old Testament was the Bible of the Church. The books of the New Testament had not yet been gathered into a volume. Some of them may not have been written. The Christian Church, even among the Gentiles, had been grafted upon the stem of David. It had an interest in Zion and Jerusalem; it saw in Babylon the type of its enemies; it felt itself to be the true Israel of God. The language and figures of the Apocalypse were, therefore, closely adapted to its condition, and must have gone home to it with peculiar power.

(3.) In connection with the symbolical nature of the Apocalypse, and with what has just been said, it is worth while to take more particular notice of *the extent to which the symbols of the book are drawn from objects familiar to the writer and his readers.* Thus we see him constantly laying the regions of Eastern nature under contribution for his purpose, and taking advantage of phenomena which, at least in the forms of their manifestation here employed, may be said to be almost peculiar to the East. Lightnings, great thunderings, hail of the most destructive severity, and earthquakes, play their part. We read of the wilderness into which the woman with the man-child was driven; of the dens and rocks of the mountains in which the terrified inhabitants of earth shall hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb; of the frightful locusts of the fifth trumpet-plague; of fowls that fill themselves with the flesh of men. In like manner we read of eagles, of the sound of the millstone, of olive trees and palm branches, of the vintage, and of the products of an Eastern clime—odours, ointments and frankincense, wine and oil. All these are directly associated with the locality to which the first readers of the book belonged. Even objects well known in other lands are viewed in the light in which the East, herein differing from the West, regards them, as when horses are presented to us, not so much in the magnificence as in the terror of their aspect; or as when the sea, instead of being the symbol of grandeur or eternal youth, time writing 'no wrinkle on its azure brow,' is spoken of only as the symbol of all that is dark or terrible.

Not only, however, does Eastern nature lend a multiplicity of figures to the Seer, the Old Testament does the same. How often does he refer to Israel and its tribes, to the tabernacle, to the temple with its pillars and incense, to the high priest's robes, to the seven-branched golden candlestick, to the ark of the testimony, to the hidden manna, and to the parchment rolls written both within and on the back! Of his use of the Prophets we have already spoken, and it is only necessary to add that in employing them as he does he is not to be regarded as their servile imitator. If his correspondence with them be marked, his originality, his free and independent handling of his materials, is still more so. He evidently feels that although he and they are dealing with the same great theme,—the development of the kingdom of God,—he is called upon to deal with it in a higher stage of its progress than that known to them. Its issues were now both more swift in their execution and more mighty in their effects.

In connection with this point, it is interesting to observe that no symbol of the Apocalypse seems to be taken from heathenism. This is not the case with the other

New Testament writers, who do not hesitate to illustrate and enforce their arguments by considerations drawn from the customs of the heathen lands around them. But it is the case with St. John in the Apocalypse. The symbolism of the book appears to be exclusively Jewish. The 'crown of life,' spoken of in chap. ii. 10, is not founded on the thought of the crown given to those who had been successful in the games of Greece and Rome, but on that of the crown of a king, of one admitted to royal dignity and clothed with royal splendour. The figure of the 'white stone' with the new name written in it of chap. ii. 17 does not spring from the white pebble which, cast in heathen courts of justice into the ballot-box, expressed the judge's acquittal of the prisoner at the bar, but in all probability from the glistering plate borne by the high priest upon his forehead. And all good commentators are agreed that the 'palms' of chap. vii. 9 are not the palms of heathen victors either in the battle or in the games, but the palms of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, when, in the most joyful of all her national festivals, Israel celebrated that life of independence on which she entered when she marched from Rameses to Succoth, and exchanged her dwellings on the hot brickfields of Egypt for the free air of the wilderness and the 'booths' which she erected on the open country. (Comp. Trench *On the Epistles to the Seven Churches.*)

(4.) After what has been said, it will be at once granted that *the symbols of the Apocalypse are to be judged of with the feelings of a Jew, and not as we should judge of symbolical writings in our own nation and age.* No one will deny that in the symbols, alike of the Old Testament and of the book before us, there are many traits which, looked at in themselves, cannot fail to strike the reader as in a high degree exaggerated, extravagant, and out of all keeping with nature or probability. They are not conceived of according to the laws, as we consider them, of good taste; and they cannot, without seriously offending us, be transferred from the pages of the book to the canvas of the painter. Take even the sublime description of the one 'like unto a Son of man' in chap. i. 13–16, or of the Lamb in chap. v. 6, 7, or of the New Jerusalem in chap. xxi. 16, and we feel at once in all these instances that nothing can be more out of keeping with the realities of things. This incongruity of imagery strikes us even more in the descriptions given of the composite animals in many of the symbols of the book, as in the case of the four living creatures of chap. iv. 6–8, of the locusts of chap. ix. 7–10, or of the beast of chap. xiii. 1, 2. But the truth is that in all these cases the congruity of the figure with nature, or with notions of propriety suggested by her, was altogether unthought of. It is probable that the style of such representations had been introduced into Judea from Assyria, the wonderful sculptures of which exhibit the very same features,—almost entire ignorance of beauty of form, but massiveness, power, strength, greatness of conception in what was designed either to attract or overawe or terrify. The sculptor in Assyria, the Prophet in the Old Testament, and precisely in the same manner St. John in the Apocalypse, had an idea in his mind which he was desirous to express; and, if the symbolism effected that end, he did not pause for a moment to inquire whether any such figure either existed in nature or could be represented by art. As he felt, so did the spectator and reader feel. It was in their eyes no objection to the symbol that the combination of details was altogether monstrous. One consideration alone weighed with them, whether these details lent a force to the idea that it could not have otherwise possessed. When, therefore, we view the symbols of the Apocalypse in this light, and it is the only just light in which to view them, our sense of propriety is no longer shocked; we rather recognise in them a vivacity, a spirit, and a force in the highest degree interesting and instructive.

(5.) While this is the case, one other observation may be made. *There is a*

natural fitness and correspondence between the symbolism employed in the Apocalypse and the truth which it is intended to express. In his choice of symbols the Seer is not left to the wildness of unregulated fancy, or to the influence of mere caprice. Consciously or unconsciously, he works within certain limits of adaptation on the part of the sign to the thing signified. It is here exactly as it is in the parables of our Lord, in which all the representations employed rest on the deeper nature of things, on the everlasting relations existing between the seen and the unseen, on that hidden unity among the different departments of truth which makes one object in nature a more suitable type or shadow of an eternal verity than another. Thus, as has been well observed by Auberlen, 'The woman could never represent the kingdom of the world, nor the beast the Church. To obtain an insight into the symbols and parables of Holy Scripture, nature, that second or rather first book of God, must be opened as well as the Bible' (*Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 87). The principle now spoken of is one of great importance, and what appears to be the correct interpretation of some of the symbols of St. John depends in no small degree on its being kept steadily in view.

IV.—Structure and Plan.

Before attempting to mark the divisions into which the Apocalypse seems naturally to fall, it may be well to notice what appear to be one or two of the leading characteristics of its structure and plan. The matter is not one of curiosity only; it has a very close bearing on the interpretation of the book. Of these characteristics we notice—

1. *That the most important visions seem to be synchronous, not successive.* We refer especially to the three great series of the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls, which occupy by much the larger portion of the prophetic part of the work. These series indeed succeed one another, as it was absolutely necessary that they should, both in the visions of the Seer and in the apprehension of his readers. The former could not see, the latter could not apprehend, them all in the same moment. But it does not follow that on that account each successive series must present events posterior in time to those of the series preceding it. The same, or at least similar, events may be repeated in each series of visions, and the difference between them may be found only in the fact that they are looked at from different points of view. Such appears to be actually the case. Let us take the first series of visions, that of the Seals, and it is almost impossible to escape the conviction that in them we have events reaching down to the final coming of the Lord. The vision of the sixth Seal, in which we read 'the great day of their wrath is come, and who is able to stand' (chap. vi. 17), can hardly refer to anything else. Then, after an episode, the seventh Seal follows, when there is 'silence in heaven about the space of half an hour' (chap. viii. 1). The work of Christ is accomplished; His enemies are overthrown; and His elect have been gathered in. Let us next take the second series of visions, that of the Trumpets, and more particularly the words of chap. xi. 15, 18. To what period can these words have relation except the great close of all? So that we are thus a second time conducted to the same point, and must regard the two series of visions as synchronous, rather than as historically successive. This conclusion is greatly strengthened when we turn to the third series of visions, that of the Bowls, which, like the two going before, is also ruled by the number seven. At the pouring out of the seventh Bowl in chap. xvi. 17, it is said that 'there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done,' while at ver. 20 it is added, 'and every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.' These words in both cases surely lead us

to the end. In the latter, indeed, they have the closest possible resemblance to those words of chap. xx. 11, which cannot be referred to anything but the final judgment. The view now taken derives great confirmation from the singular parallelism running through the judgments of the Trumpets and the Bowls, and exhibited in the following table :—

	TRUMPETS RELATING TO	BOWLS RELATING TO
First,	The earth, chap. viii. 7.	The earth, chap. xvi. 2.
Second,	The sea, chap. viii. 8.	The sea, chap. xvi. 3.
Third,	Rivers and fountains of the waters, chap. viii. 10.	Rivers and fountains of the waters, chap. xvi. 4.
Fourth,	The sun, and moon, and stars, chap. viii. 12.	The sun, chap. xvi. 8.
Fifth,	The pit of the abyss, chap. ix. 2.	The throne of the beast, chap. xvi. 10.
Sixth,	The great river Euphrates, chap. ix. 14.	The great river Euphrates, chap. xvi. 12.
Seventh,	Great voices in heaven, followed by lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail, chap. xi. 15, 19.	A great voice from the throne, followed by lightnings, and voices, and thunders, a great earthquake, and great hail, chap. xvi. 17, 18, 21.

A simple inspection of this table must of itself be almost sufficient to convince us of the great improbability of the supposition, that the two series in question relate to events of an entirely different kind, and separated from one another by long periods of time. It is surely much more likely that they express the same dealings of the Almighty's providence, though marked by certain points of distinction that we have still to notice.

Other illustrations may help still further to establish the truth of what has been said. Thus at the beginning of chap. xii. we have the vision of the woman clothed with the sun, and the bearer of a man-child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. This can be referred to nothing but the birth of Christ; yet it comes in after the visions of the Seals and of the Trumpets have both been closed,—a clear proof that the principle of structure here is not that of historical succession. Another striking instance of the same kind is afforded by the comparison of chap. xii. 6 and chap. xii. 14, where we have not two different flights of the woman into the wilderness, the two being only different aspects of one and the same flight.

These considerations, which might easily be illustrated at greater length, lead to the conclusion that in the main visions of the Apocalypse we have different series, not of successive, but of parallel and synchronous pictures, each series being complete in the particular line of thought presented by it, each being occupied not so much with events upon the temporal relation of which to one another we are to dwell, as with the presentation in a different light of the idea common to all the series. Something of the same kind may be seen in the parable of the wicked husbandmen in Luke xx. 9–15, where a succession of messengers is sent by the owner of the vineyard to demand his portion of the fruits. The dominating thought in the three messages of the owner, and in the threefold reception given to them, is not that of succession of time, as if each rejection involved certain historical events following what went before. The same picture of criminality is rather the leading thought of all the three rejections of the owner's message, though in each it is marked by special characteristics. So in the pictures of the Apocalypse of which we have been speaking there may be succession, even it may be in a certain sense succession of time: but it is succession of another kind altogether upon which we are invited to dwell. We are thus led to a second characteristic of these visions.

2. *While synchronous rather than successive, they are at the same time climactic.* In the parable of the wicked husbandmen, already referred to, climax in the guilt of those who rejected the just claims of the owner of the vineyard is distinctly traceable. In like manner the visions of the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls, which constitute by far the larger portion of the Apocalypse, are not simply repetitions of the same thing. They are exhibitions of the same principle under different aspects, and the distinguishing feature of the difference is climax. This climax appears in the very selection of the objects by which each series of visions is characterized, and from which it is named. As compared with the first series, the second, by the simple fact that it is a series of *Trumpets*, indicates a higher, more exciting, and more terrible unfolding of the wrath of God upon a sinful world than was the case under the *Seals*. The trumpet is peculiarly the warlike instrument summoning the hosts to battle, and it thus connects itself with the judgments of God more closely than the seal (Jer. iv. 19; Joel ii. 1; Zeph. i. 15, 16). The *bowl*, again, was used in the service of the temple, and thus suggests, when it is made the instrument of judgment, a still more alarming idea of what the wrath of God will effect than is suggested by the trumpet. Besides which the supreme potency of the Bowls is distinctly expressed in the words by which they are introduced in chap. xv. 1, where we are told of the plagues contained in them that they are 'the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.' They are the consummation of all judgment, the most complete manifestation of Him who not only rewards the righteous, but condemns and punishes the wicked.

If, again, we look at the three groups of visions as wholes, the same principle of climax shows itself. The Seals describe to us judgments of God, and thus indeed imply the sinfulness of man, for otherwise there would be no judgment; there would be only 'peace,' not a 'sword.' But this sinfulness of man is not brought to light, and judgments have not their specific reference to it unfolded. Even when we are bid see the souls under the altar, no more is said than that they had been slain for their adherence to the truth. The slaying itself had not been spoken of; while the different riders who come forth upon their horses are described as having 'power given' them to inflict judgment rather than as exercising that power. The series of the Trumpets marks an advance on this. It is not merely hinted now that the 'souls' had suffered on earth. We see them in the midst of suffering. They are brought before us, ere the series opens, as sending up their prayers out of their tribulation to Him who will avenge His elect (chap. viii. 3, 4). The judgments, accordingly, that now descend are a direct answer to these prayers. They are brought about by the fire of the altar upon which the prayers were laid being cast into the earth (chap. viii. 5). This progress is continued in the Bowls; yet not so much in temporal, in historical, succession, as in wickedness, in deliberate and determined rejection of the truth. The world has advanced in sin. Prophecy has again been uttered 'before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings' (chap. x. 11). The faithful witnesses have witnessed and been slain, and have ascended up to heaven in a cloud; but they that dwelt upon the earth have only rejoiced over them, and made merry, and sent gifts one to another (chap. xi. 10). The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet have successfully played their part (chaps. xii. xiii.). Therefore judgment falls, and falls naturally, with intensely increased severity.

Did our space permit, the point now before us might be very fully illustrated by a more minute comparison than was called for when considering our previous point, between the individual Trumpets and the corresponding Bowls. We can only advise our readers to make the comparison for themselves, when they will not fail to see how strikingly an increased potency of judgment is brought out under the latter.

Thus it is that we may mark a most important succession in these visions, and this even although each series extends over the whole period of the Church's militant and oppressed history. There is a succession of a far more deeply interesting character than that of time, inasmuch as the successive series reveal to us ever deepening views of the conflict of the Church, of the opposition of the world to the truth, and of the judgments by which the sin of the world shall be visited.

3. In speaking of the structure of the Apocalypse, we have further *to mark the symmetrical arrangement of its parts.* We see this even in the Epistles to the seven churches in chaps. ii. and iii., which cannot be considered the most characteristic portion of the book. The composition of each of these Epistles upon the same plan is so obvious to every reader that it is unnecessary to enter into details.

When we turn to the body of the Apocalypse this symmetry of arrangement comes before us in a still more striking light. We have seven Seals, seven Trumpets, seven Bowls. Even these again are arranged symmetrically, the first four members of each group relating to earth, and a transition being made in each at the fifth member to the spiritual world. The table of comparison between the Trumpets and the Bowls, already given, may illustrate not only the parallelism, but the symmetry of the series. Still further it may be observed that, except in the case of the Bowls, the members of these series do not run on in uninterrupted succession to the end. There is a break between the sixth and seventh Seals, where we have presented to us the two visions of the sealing of the 144,000 and of the great multitude standing before the Lamb (chap. vii.). Precisely in the same way we have a break between the sixth and seventh Trumpets, where we meet the visions of the little book and of the measuring of the temple, together with the action and fate of the two witnesses who perish in their faithfulness, but are triumphant in death (chap. xi.). These are visions of comfort, episodes of consolation, obviously intended to sustain the soul in the thought of the last great outburst of the wrath of the Most High. It may, indeed, be asked why we have not similar visions between the sixth and seventh Bowls in order to complete the harmony? The answer to the question does not seem to be difficult. In this case the consolatory visions, those of chap. xiv., consisting of the Lamb upon Mount Zion and of the harvest and vintage of the earth, precede not simply the seventh Bowl, but all the seven, because the Lord is now making a short work upon the earth. The element of climax, in short, overcomes at this point that of perfect regularity. It does this, however, only to a small extent, for the visions of consolation are still there. Finally, it may be noticed that of the seven parts into which the Apocalypse may be best divided the seventh corresponds to the first, the sixth to the second, the fifth to the third, while the fourth or main section of the book occupies the central place.

4. Before passing from the structure and plan of the Apocalypse, it may be well *to mark the parts into which it most naturally divides itself.* These appear to be seven in number.

(1.) The Prologue: chap. i. 1–20. The book opens with a general description of One of whom it is said that He was 'like unto a son of man' (ver. 13); and there can be no doubt that He who is spoken of is the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet it is peculiarly important to observe that the Saviour is here presented to us less in His eternal glory, than as the great King and Head of His Church on earth. He is not only 'the first and the last;' He says of Himself, 'I was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and I have the keys of death and of Hades' (ver. 18). Add to this the fact that all the particulars given of Him (vers. 13–16) are taken up again in chaps. ii. and iii., and are there brought into relation with one or other of those seven

churches which, when united, set before us the universal Church, and we can have no hesitation in saying that in the Christ of this Prologue the Church is ideally included. In it Christ is one with His Church, and His Church is one with Him.

(2.) The presentation of the Church as she stands before us upon the field of human history: chaps. ii. and iii. That the seven churches to which the Epistles contained in these two chapters are addressed, represent the Church universal, as she extends throughout all lands, and is perpetuated in all ages, is a point which need not be discussed. All inquirers may be said to admit it. The object, therefore, of these chapters is to make us acquainted with what the Church is, alike in her strength and in her weakness, in her glory and in her shame, before her contest with her enemies is described.

(3.) General sketch of the issue of the Church's contest: chaps. iv. and v. We have no space to examine the opinions of others with regard to these two chapters, and must rest satisfied with indicating the light in which it seems necessary to regard them. It is obvious that they are no part of the conflict, a description of which is the main object of the book. The visions representing it begin only with chap. vi. They are pictures of an introductory nature, bringing before us the heavenly Guardians of the Church as They preside over her destinies, and the Church herself as, in Their strength, she triumphs over all her foes. In short, having introduced the Church to us in chaps. ii. and iii., and having placed her on the field of actual history, the Seer would now give a representation of the victorious progress that awaits her in the conflict immediately to follow.

(4.) The contest of the Church with her enemies: chap. vi. 1–xviii. 24. In this section we have the leading portion of the book; and its object is to bring the Church before us, both in the height of her conflict with her three great enemies, the devil the world and the false prophet, and in the security of her victory over them. It is impossible at the same time to mistake the progress by which these chapters are marked, until the last Bowls of the wrath of God have been poured out, and Babylon has been completely overthrown.

(5.) The rest of the true disciples of Jesus when their conflict is past: chap. xix. 1–xx. 6. In this section the conflict described in the last section is over. There is no struggle now; there are only hallelujahs of praise. The great enemies of the Church have indeed to be cast out, and this is done with the two, the beast and the false prophet, who had been the vicegerents of the devil upon earth. Before the section ends they are plunged into the lake of fire, and the devil himself is bound for a season, that the Church may enjoy undisturbed repose and triumph.

(6.) The final conflict and victory of the saints: chap. xx. 7–xxii. 5. The rest of Christ's disciples at the close of their great conflict was not yet permanent. The devil had been bound, but not for ever driven away. He is permitted to return and make a final attack upon 'the camp of the saints and the beloved city.' But the attack is unsuccessful. He too is cast into the lake of fire, and the glory and happiness of God's people is perfected in the New Jerusalem.

(7.) Epilogue: chap. xxii. 6–21. The concluding section of the Apocalypse brings before us the use to be made of the delineation given, and stirs up the Church to a more earnest cry than ever that her Lord would 'come' and accomplish all the promises of the book.

Such appears to be the most natural division of the contents of the Apocalypse. We can only, before passing to another point, ask our readers to compare it with what has been said in the Introduction to the Gospel of St. John with regard to the sections of that book (p. xxvii.). The present writer has dwelt more largely upon the

comparison of the two in the *Expositor* for Febr. 1883, p. 102, and to the paper there published he would direct those who are interested in the subject.

V.—Interpretation of the Apocalypse.

The remarks made in the two preceding sections of this Introduction on the general design and nature of the Apocalypse, as well as upon its structure and plan, have so far prepared the way for the principles upon which it is to be interpreted. It is necessary, however, to enter somewhat more fully into this point, for no book of Scripture has suffered so much from the variety of those systems of interpretation to which it has been exposed. To such an extent has this been the case, that many have been led to doubt whether anything like a definite interpretation is possible. Such a suggestion cannot be yielded to for a moment. If one thing be clearer than another, it is that the book was intended to be understood. Let us look at its title. It is 'The *Revelation* of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to *show* unto His servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass' (chap. i. 1). Let us listen to some of the earliest words spoken to the Seer by the glorious Person who appears to him. They are, 'What thou seest write in a book, and send it to the seven churches' (chap. i. 11). Or let us hear almost the last instructions of the angel when the visions of the book have ended, 'Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand' (chap. xxii. 10); while, with still more pointed reference to the use to be made of it, the exalted Redeemer Himself declares, 'I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify to you these things for the churches' (chap. xxii. 16). The message of the Revelation, then, was not to be sealed up. It was to be spoken, to be testified, to man; and, if so, can any one for an instant doubt that it was to be listened to, to be apprehended, to be taken home, by man? The words, so solemnly repeated in each of the Epistles to the seven churches of Asia, may certainly be applied, if indeed it was not intended that they should be applied, to the whole of the book with which they are so intimately bound up, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.'

While it was thus the object of the Apocalypse to be understood, it ought not, upon the other hand, to be supposed that symbolical language is less the expression of thought, or that it is used with a less definite meaning, than any other language which a writer employs. Its details may indeed often elude our powers of interpretation; but this may arise from the fact that even to the Seer himself these details had no separate and individual force. Or, if they had, and we cannot understand them, we may yet be able to reach a sufficiently clear apprehension of the symbols as a whole.

The difficulty of interpreting the Apocalypse, therefore, lies neither in the intention of God nor in the character of the language. Much more than from either of these causes it has arisen from the fact that, owing to its peculiar nature, the book has lent itself in a greater than common degree to the theological polemic, and to the strifes of contending parties in the Church. Dealing with the fortunes of the people of God in this world, it has enabled all who considered themselves peculiarly His people, that is, almost every sect in turn, to launch its anathemas at the heads of others, and to see these others typified in the dark descriptions of which its pages are full. Thus its sublimity has been marred and its beauty soiled; while its noble lessons, intended to inculcate the widest views of God's superintending care of His whole Church, have been converted into catch-words which have not only alienated the world, but have even narrowed the hearts of Christian men. It is most con-

solatory to think that a new era has of late been opening for the Apocalypse. Recent interpreters, or writers on particular parts of it, have been distinctly approaching to a unanimity never before observed in regard to its interpretation. We may hope that the time is not distant when, under a well-regulated exegesis, the Apocalypse will lighten the dark places of the Church's pilgrimage with a light as clear as that with which its visions, when originally seen, lightened the lonely rock of Patmos to the exiled Seer.

1. Of the systems of interpretation which have been applied to the Apocalypse, but which it is necessary to lay aside if we would profit from it, the first to be noticed is the *Continuously Historical*. We speak first of this, because it has probably its largest number of defenders in the British Islands and in America. The principle of the system is that the book is a predictive prophecy, dealing with specific events of history from the beginning to the close of the Christian era. All the greatest incidents, and, it must be added, some of the most trivial details, of the past or present (such as the red colour of the stockings of Romish cardinals) are to be seen in its prophetic page; and the pious mind derives its encouragement and comfort from the thought that these things were long ago foretold. Nor is there any reason why it should not do so were it possible to fix the interpretation. But the whole school of historical interpreters has been irretrievably discredited, if not by the extravagance or paltriness of its explanations, at least by their hopeless divergence from, and contradiction of, one another. Besides this, it has to be observed that to make the Apocalypse deal almost exclusively with these historical incidents belonging to the later history of the Church, is to make it a book that must have been useless to those for whom it was first written. How could the early Christians discover in it the establishment of Christianity under Constantine, the rise of Mahomedanism, the Lutheran Reformation, or the French Revolution? Of what possible use would it have been to foretell to them events in which they could have no interest? Would they have been either wiser or better if they had known them? Would they not have substituted a vain prying into the future for the study of those divine principles which, belonging to every age, bring the weight of universal history to enforce the lessons of our own time? Would it not have made particular events, instead of the principles of the Divine government of the world, the chief matter with which we have to concern ourselves? Nothing has tended more to destroy the feeling that there is value in the Apocalypse than this continuously historical interpretation of the book. The day, however, for such interpretations has passed, probably never to return.

2. A second system of apocalyptic interpretation which, not less than the former, must be set aside, is that known as the *Præterist*. By this system the whole book is confined to events surrounding the Seer, or immediately to follow his day, these events being mainly the overthrow, first of the Jews, and next of pagan Rome, to be succeeded by peace and prosperity to the Church for a thousand years. This system, the introduction of which in its completeness is generally ascribed to a distinguished Jesuit of the seventeenth century, seems to have rested partly on the opposition of the Church of Rome to that Protestant interpretation which regarded her as the apocalyptic Babylon, and partly on the statements of the book itself in chap. i. 1, 3, where it describes its contents as 'the things which must shortly come to pass,' and expressly states that 'the time is at hand.' Nor is it to be denied that there is a much larger element of truth in this system than in that continuously historical one of which we have just spoken. It may without hesitation be conceded that the Seer did draw from his own experience, and from what he beheld around him either fully developed or in germ, those lessons as to God's dealings with the Church and with the world

which he applies to all time. It may also without impropriety be allowed that he could have no idea that the Second Coming of Christ would be so long delayed as it has been, and that he may have thought of it as likely to take place so soon as events, already seen by him in their beginnings, should be accomplished. But it is impossible to admit that, whether or not he anticipated the length of time that was to elapse before the Lord's return, he deliberately confined himself to the Church's fortunes in his own day, and left unnoticed whatever of pilgrimage and warfare was still in store for her. The whole tone of the book leads to the opposite conclusion. It certainly treats of what was to happen down to the very end of time, until the hour of the full accomplishment of the Church's struggle, of the full winning of her victory, and of the full attainment of her rest. We do not object to the Præterist view on the ground that, were it correct, it would make the Apostle speak only of events long since passed away and of little present interest to us. The same reasoning would deprive of permanent value much of the teaching of the New Testament Epistles. We object to it rather upon exegetical grounds. The Apocalypse bears distinctly upon its face that it is concerned with the history of the Church until she enters upon her heavenly inheritance.

3. A third system of apocalyptic interpretation known as the *Futurist* has still to be noticed, but noticed only to be, like the two preceding ones, set aside. The main principle of this system is that almost the whole, if not the whole, book belongs to the future, that the time for its fulfilment has not yet come, and that it will not come until the very eve of our Lord's return. With an element of truth in it to which we shall immediately advert, it is obvious that this system, as a whole, is indefensible. It destroys one of the main purposes of the Apocalypse, which was to strengthen and encourage the Church at the moment when it was written. It robs it of no small part of its value for the Church in after ages, for how shall we know when the *eve* of our Lord's return arrives? Nothing but the return itself, which is to take place like a thief in the night, can show when the eve was. The Church, therefore, upon this system, could never apply the events of the book directly to herself. She could never tell whether she was living in the last days of her history till the days were over. No doubt it may be said that a picture even of the future like that here presented may encourage. But a just exegesis of the book again comes in to prevent our supposing that we have only a picture of the future. The Church is addressed in her present circumstances, and is told what is to be done to her and for her at the instant when she reads the book, as well as at some distant day.

Yet there is an element of truth in the Futurist as well as in the Præterist scheme of interpretation. The book does belong to the time of the end, because that time is always, has always been, at hand. According to our modes of reckoning it may be delayed, but with God 'one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day,' and it is from the Divine point of view that the apocalyptic visions are presented to St. John. The Christian Church has been denied knowledge of the time when the Bridegroom will come, for this reason above all, that she may live in continual expectation of His coming, and so be at all times ready to meet Him. If she is always in the midst of her struggle, she may at the same time always believe that she is near its close. When, therefore, with the lessons of the Apocalypse she associates the idea that the cry is already going forth, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,' she is only acting in the spirit of a book the distinguishing note of which is 'I come quickly.'

The truth is, that both the Præterist and the Futurist system err in adopting too much of the principle which, on the continuously historical scheme, has been carried

to such unwarrantable excess. The former is right, in so far as it recognises the fact that the Seer dealt, first of all, with the events of his own day, and gathered even his most general lessons from them. The latter is right, in so far as it lays emphasis on the fact that throughout the whole book the Lord is at hand. But both are wrong in so far as they imagine that the Apocalypse deals with specific events rather than great principles, and in so far as they fail to observe that the principles with which it deals are applicable not only at the beginning or end, but throughout the whole period of the Church's history in this world. It is a mistake to imagine that the Church of Christ, in order to find comfort, must know the particular form which her trials will assume in any special age. To let her know this beforehand would, in many cases, be an impossibility; for in the nature of things an early age cannot, even if instructed, enter into the experiences of a later one, and so cannot conceive aright what may be the difficulties of the children of God in times long subsequent to itself. The Church knows enough if she is told that throughout all her earthly history her sufferings shall be those of her Lord, that at every point of it she will have to struggle with the world around her as He had to struggle with the world around Him; but that, however various her forms of suffering, her cup shall be no other than that of which He drank, and her baptism no other than that with which He was baptized. More than this is not only unnecessary; it might mislead. It might withdraw the Church's thoughts from the great truth that she is to be the companion of Jesus in His sorrows, in order to make her engage her thoughts with those more particular events which it is not of the slightest consequence for her to know. The Præterist and Futurist systems forget this, and so lose sight of the universal applicability of the book to the Church's fortunes.

Our readers will now easily understand that in the following Commentary the Apocalypse is not interpreted upon any of these three great systems. The book is regarded throughout as taking no note of time whatsoever, except in so far as there is a necessary beginning, and at the same time an end, of the action with which it is occupied. All the symbols are treated as symbolical of principles rather than of events; and that, though it is at once admitted that some particular event, whether always discoverable or not, lies at the bottom of each. All the numbers of the book are regarded also as symbolical, even the two horns of the lamb-like beast in chap. xiii. 11, expressing not the fact that the animal referred to has two horns (which it has not), but an entirely different meaning. The book thus becomes to us not a history of either early, or mediæval, or last events written of before they happened, but a solemn warning to Christians that in every age they have to consider the signs of their own time; and that, if they are true to their profession, they will find themselves in one way or another in their Master's position, and needing to be animated and comforted by the thought that, as He passed through suffering to glory, so shall they. In this sense the Apocalypse was most strictly applicable to St. John's own day, but it has been not less applicable in every age since then, and it will continue to apply with equal force to all ages that may be yet to come before the end.

It is in this point of view that the present writer feels that the Apocalypse is of such inestimable value to the Church; and that he cannot but lament the prevalence of those false modes of interpretation which, as it seems to him, have reduced it from the high moral and religious level at which it ought to stand to that of a puzzle for the curious, or a storehouse of harsh epithets for the controversial. It is strange to think that a book which points out to Christians how great must be their likeness to their Lord in all that ought to make them most humble-minded, most meek, and most forgiving, has been so often used as a means of fomenting spiritual pride and

every form of uncharitableness. There is no book of Scripture which ought so much to soften the heart, to remind us that we are strangers here, and to lead us, through the thought of that contest with the world which we are so unwilling to face, into feelings of sympathy with all who are in any degree striving to exercise similar self-denial. But it will do this only when we see that the one thought upon which it rests, and which all its symbols are designed to impress upon us, is, that, as the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in an evil world, our lot is to 'suffer with Him,' that with Him we may be also 'glorified.'

Of the principles upon which this Commentary has been written, as well as of those upon which the text has been determined, it is not necessary to speak now. They have been already explained in the Introduction to the Gospel of St. John (p. xxxv.); and it need only be added that the text of Drs. Westcott and Hort, as being in the opinion of the writer the best critical edition of the Greek New Testament that we possess, has been almost uniformly adopted. The influence of the Revised Version will also be traced throughout the Commentary; but this, in the circumstances, will be allowed to have been natural, if not indeed unavoidable. At the same time the text of that Version has been by no means slavishly followed.

The Author regrets that the limits to which he was confined have prevented so full a discussion of many points as he could have wished. He has been even not unfrequently compelled to give results without stating the grounds upon which they rest. This could not be helped. One effect of the limitation of his space may not be unacceptable to the reader. It has made it necessary to avoid quoting at any length the opinions of other commentators. On all disputed passages, and how numerous these are every student of the Apocalypse knows, the Author has endeavoured to come to an independent and definite conclusion.

This Introduction ought not to be closed without the Author's expressing his sense of obligation to his friend and old pupil, the Rev. James Cooper, Aberdeen, to whom he is indebted for many valuable suggestions, as well as to another friend, also an old pupil, the Rev. Alexander Fiddes of the same city, who has given him great assistance in the correction of the press.

THE UNIVERSITY, ABERDEEN,
1883.

THE REVELATION

OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

CHAPTER I. 1–8.

The Preface and Salutation.

1 THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things [1] which [a] must shortly [2] come to pass; and he sent [3] and signified *it* by his [b] angel unto
2 his servant John: [4] who bare [c] record [5] of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and [6] of all things that he saw.
3 Blessed *is* he that [d] readeth, and they that hear the words of this [7] prophecy, and keep those [7] things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand.
4 JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: [e] Grace *be* [8] unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven [f] Spirits which are
5 before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* [9] the first-begotten [10] of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved [11] us, and washed [12]
6 us from our sins in his wn [13] blood, and hath [14] made [15] us [g] kings and priests [16] unto God and his Father; [17] to him *be* glory
7 and dominion [18] for ever and ever. Amen. Beh ld, he cometh with clouds; [19] and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which [20] [h] pierced him: and all kindreds [21] of the earth shall
8 [i] wail because of him. [22] Even so, Amen. [23] I am Alpha and Omega, [24] the beginning and the ending, [25] saith the [k] Lord, [26] which [27] is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

[a] Hab. ii. 3.
[b] Dan. x. 11.
[c] Jo. xxi. 24.
[d] Mat. xxiv. 15.
[e] 1 Cor. i. 3.
[f] Zech. vi. 5.
[g] Ex xix. 6; 1 Pet. ii. 5-9
[h] Zech. xii. 10; Jo. xix. 37.
[i] Mat. xxiv. 30.
[k] Tit. ii. 20.

[1] the things
[2] quickly
[3] *add* through his angel
[4] and signified them unto his servant John
[5] witness
[6] even
[7] the
[8] omit *be*
[9] omit *and*
[10] born
[11] loveth
[12] loosed
[13] *omit* own
[14] *omit* hath
[15] he made
[16] a kingdom, priests
[17] his God and Father
[18] the glory and the dominion
[19] the clouds
[20] even they that
[21] the tribes
[22] over him
[23] Yea. Amen.
[24] the Alpha and the Omega,
[25] *omit* the beginning and the ending
[26] *add* God;
[27] he which

CONTENTS. In the first paragraph of the chapter we have the Preface and the Salutation of the book, the one extending from ver. 1 to ver. 3, the other from ver. 4 to ver. 8. The Preface consists of three parts,—the person from whom the revelation came; the fidelity with which it was received and uttered by him to whom it was primarily given; and the blessedness of those who receive and keep it. The Salutation consists also of three parts,—a benediction from the Triune God, from whom grace and peace descend to the Church; a doxology to that glorified Redeemer in whom His people are delivered from sin and in their turn prepared for glory; and a brief intimation of the bright prospect, to be further unfolded in the book, of a time when the Lord Jesus Christ, now hidden from the view, shall Himself return to perfect the happiness of His redeemed, and to take vengeance upon all who in this world have persecuted and crucified them, as they once persecuted and crucified Him.

Both Preface and Salutation thus prepare us for what is to come, by impressing upon us the supreme importance of the revelation about to be made, and by conveying to the Church, even at the very outset, the joyful assurance of her ultimate and eternal triumph. Finally, both are followed by an utterance of our Lord Himself, interrupting the Seer (as God interrupted the Psalmist in Ps. ii. 6), and commanding our attention by reminding us that He who sends the revelation is very and eternal God.

Ver. 1. The book is a **revelation**, a drawing back of the veil which, to the merely human eye, hangs over the purposes of God; and it is a revelation **of Jesus Christ**, that is, not a revelation of what Jesus Christ is, but a revelation which Jesus Christ gives to His Church, even as the Father had given it to Him. As in the Gospel of St. John, God the Father is here the fountain of all blessing; but whatever He has He gives to the Son (John vii. 16, xii. 49, xiv. 10, xvii. 7, 8); and whatever the Son has He in His turn makes His people share,—'Even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us' (John xvii. 21). We have thus Jesus introduced to us, not simply as He was on earth, but as He has passed through the sufferings of earth to the glory of heaven. He has been dead, but He is now the First-born of the dead; and as such He sends and signifies the revelation unto His servant John.

The object of the revelation on the part of Jesus Christ [for it is to Him that the pronouns 'him,' 'his,' and 'he' in this verse must in each instance be referred] is to show certain things **unto his servants**. These are the members of the Christian Church, of the one Body of Christ, without distinction of standing or of office. St. John is a 'servant' (chap. i. 1); the prophets are 'servants' (chap. x. 7, xi. 18); and all members of the Church are designated in the same way (chaps. ii. 20, vii. 3, xix. 2, 5, xxii. 3, 6, 9).—The things to be shown are **things which must quickly come to pass**. And the word of the original, which can only be rendered in English by 'come to pass,' shows that it is not a beginning that is thought of but a full accomplishment. Nor can we fail to notice that they 'must' come to pass. They are the purposes of no fallible or mortal creature, but of the infallible and eternal God.—The words **through his angel** are to be connected with **sent** (comp. chap. xxii. 6); and the word **signified** must be allowed to stand in all its own absolute solemnity and force. It is by no means improbable that in this latter word there is special reference to 'signs,' to the figures which are to be used in the book, and which need to be interpreted. The word may indicate not only prophetic intimation (John xii. 33, xviii. 32, xxi. 19; Acts xi. 28), but the manner in which such intimation was usual among the prophets (see especially Ezekiel and Zechariah), that is, by 'signs,' significant acts, and parabolic words. Thus our Lord, by speaking of 'being lifted on high' as the brazen serpent was lifted on high, 'signified' by what manner of death He should die (John xii. 33). On the only occasion in which the word is found in the N. T. in a more ordinary sense, it is employed by a heathen (Acts xxv. 27).—That St. John names himself here, while in his Gospel he only discovers himself to those who can read his name through the symbols in which he speaks, is easily explained. We are dealing with prophecy, and prophecy requires the guarantee of the individual who is inspired to utter it.

Ver. 2. The source of the revelation has been declared, and is now followed by a description of the spirit in which the revelation itself was received and communicated to the Church. Individually St. John is nothing: he is only a **witness** to the Divine, to the **word of God**, and to the **testimony** given by **Jesus Christ** 'the Faithful Witness' (comp. ver. 5, iii. 14). For 'and' in the last clause of the verse, as it is read in the Authorised Version, we must substitute 'even;' the clause **all things that he saw** being only a description from another point of view of the things contained in 'the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.' The verse as a whole is thus to be understood of the revelation of this book. It has indeed been urged that the writer could not in the preamble speak of the contents of the book as past. But he does so in ver. 3, in which the whole prophecy is supposed to have been already uttered. Here, in like manner, he places himself at the end of his visions, and speaks of them as things that he has already 'seen.' Nor is the verse, when looked at in this light, only a repetition of ver. 1, for the emphasis lies upon 'bare witness,' upon the attitude of the Seer rather than upon the things seen. Add to all this that the verb 'saw' is constantly used throughout the book in the technical sense of beholding visions.

Ver. 3. The mention of the source of the revelation, and of the perfect faithfulness with which it has been recorded, are now fitly followed by a blessing pronounced upon such as receive and keep it. The allusion in **he that readeth** is to the public reading of books of Scripture in the congregation or in any assembly of Christians. One read, many heard; hence the change of number when we pass from the former to the latter. But the book must not only be heard, it must be 'kept;' that is, not simply must it be obeyed, it must be preserved or treasured in the heart, that there it may become the spirit and the rule of life. Thus, also, it follows that **the things written therein** are not to be limited to those exhortations to repentance, faith, patience, etc., which accompany the visions; they include all

the words of the prophecy. The visions, indeed, are the main foundation and purport of the whole book. They reveal that future upon the knowledge of which the practical exhortations rest. Finally, the blessedness of thus 'keeping' the revelation is enforced by the thought that the time, the distinct and definite season, when all shall be accomplished, is at hand (comp. ver. 1). And it was at hand, though 1800 years have passed since the words were spoken. We shall see, as we proceed, that the book deals with principles which have been exhibiting themselves throughout the whole period of the Church's history. Thus the things written in it were 'at hand' in the days of the Apostle; they have always been 'at hand' to cheer the saints of God in the midst of their pilgrimage and warfare; they are 'at hand' now; for the words have never ceased to be fulfilled, 'Lo, I am with you alway;' 'In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'

The Preface of the book is over, and the Salutation follows.

Vers. 4–6. After the manner of the prophets of the O. T., the writer now brings himself forward by name, and directly addresses the Church. In the consciousness of his Divine commission, and of his own faithfulness to it, he is bold. It is the seven churches which are in Asia that are addressed, that is, in Proconsular Asia (comp. 1 Cor. xvi. 19), a Roman province at the western extremity of what is now known as Asia Minor. Of this province Ephesus was the capital, and few early traditions of the Church seem more worthy of reliance than those which inform us that at Ephesus St. John spent the latter years of his life. The churches of that neighbourhood would thus naturally be of peculiar interest to him, and he would be more intimately acquainted with their condition than with that of others. The question may indeed be asked, why a prophecy bearing so closely as the Book of Revelation does upon the condition of the whole Church should be addressed to so limited an area. The answer will meet us at ver. 11, and in the meantime it is enough to say that the number seven is to be taken, not according to its numerical but its sacred value. It is the number of the covenant, and in these seven churches we have a representation of the Church universal. To the latter, therefore, to the Church of every country and of all time, the Revelation is addressed.

The Salutation wishes grace and peace, the same blessings, and in the same order, as so often found in the writings of the other apostles,—'grace' first, 'peace' afterwards, the love of God supplying us with all needful strength, and keeping our hearts calm even amidst such troubles as those about to be recorded in this book. The Salutation is given in the name of the three Persons of the Trinity.

(1) The Father, described as He which is, and which was, and which is to come. In the original Greek of this verse we have a striking illustration of those so-called solecisms of the Revelation of which we have spoken in the Introduction, p. 4. The pronoun 'which' is not grammatically construed with the preposition 'from' preceding it: instead of standing in one of the deflected cases, it stands in the nominative. The explanation is obvious. St. John sublimely treats the clause (which is really a paraphrase or translation of the Name of God in Ex. iii. 14—I AM THAT I AM) as an indeclinable noun, the name of Him who is absolute and unchangeable. That Name denoted God to Israel not so much in His abstract existence as in His covenant relation to His people, and it has the same sense here. Hence the use of the words 'which is to come,' instead of, what we might have expected, 'which will be' (comp. ver. 8, iv. 8). The change of expression does not depend upon the fact that there is no 'will be' with an Eternal God, but that with Him all *is*, because upon the same principle we ought not to have it said of Him 'which was.' It depends upon the fact that God is here contemplated as the redeeming God, and that as such He comes, and will come, to His people. The Son is never alone even as Redeemer. He 'can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing' (John v. 19). When He comes the Father comes, according to the promise of Jesus, 'If a man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with Him' (John xiv. 23). As, therefore, throughout this whole book the Son is the 'coming' One, so the same term is here properly applied to the Father,—not 'which is, and which was, and which will be,' but 'which is, and which was, and which is to come.'

(2) The Holy Spirit, described in the words the seven Spirits which are before his throne. It is impossible to understand these words of any principal angels such as those of chap. viii. 2, for no creature could be spoken of as the source of 'grace and peace,' be associated with the Father and the Son, or be made to take precedence of the Son, who is not introduced to us till the following verse. Nor can they refer to any seven gifts or graces of the Spirit, for they are obviously intended to convey the thought not of a gift but of a giver. We must learn the meaning by looking at other passages of this book. In chap. iv. 5 we read of seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, 'which are the seven Spirits of God.' In chap. v. 6 we read that the Lamb has seven eyes, 'which are the seven Spirits of God sent into all the earth;' and in chap. iii. 1 we are told of Jesus the Head of the Church that He 'hath the seven Spirits of God.' These seven Spirits, then, belong to the Son as well as to the Father (comp. note on John xv. 26). What has been said will become still clearer if we turn to Zech. iii. 9 and iv. 10, in the first of which we have mention made of the stone with seven eyes, while in the second it is said of these eyes that they 'run to and fro through the whole earth.' This stone is the Messiah, so that putting the Old and New Testaments together, no doubt can remain on our minds that we have before us a figure for the Holy Spirit. He is called 'the seven Spirits,' the mystical number seven being identical with unity, though unity unfolded in diversity, and denoting Him in His completeness and fulness as adapted to the seven churches or the Universal Church. By Him the whole Church is enlightened and quickened.—The idea of the words 'before His throne' seems to be taken from the thought of the seven-branched golden candlestick in the tabernacle.

(3) The Son. That the Salutation culminates in the Son is proved by the fact that He has three designations, and that, in ver. 6, three separate

parts of His work are mentioned. We might have expected the Son to be spoken of before the Spirit. But it is the manner of St. John, strikingly illustrated in the Prologue to His Gospel, so to arrange what he has to say that a new sentence shall spring out of the closing thought of that immediately preceding. Thus in this very chapter the mention of 'John' in ver. 1 is unfolded into the long description of ver. 2; and the mention of the readers and hearers of this prophecy in ver. 3 into the more specific reference to the seven churches in ver. 4. In like manner here the Son is not only the leading theme of the book, but He is to be dwelt upon in the large and full statement of vers. 5–8. This, therefore, was the proper place to speak of Him. Three particulars regarding Him are noted. First, He is **the faithful witness**, the giver of the 'testimony' already spoken of in ver. 2; and, so high and holy is the qualification, that even after the preposition the name 'Witness' in the original is in the nominative case. The idea of witnessing as applied to Jesus is a favourite one both in the Apocalypse and in the Gospel (Rev. iii. 14, xii. 17, xix. 10, xxii. 20; John iii. 11, 32, iv. 44, v. 31, 32, vii. 7, viii. 14, xiii. 21, xviii. 37, etc.). The designation is also found in Ps. lxxxix. 37, and in Isa. lv. 4. The combination with the word 'true' in chaps. xix. 11, xxi. 5, xxii. 6, and especially in chap. iii. 14, seems to show that the faithfulness is not simply that of One who, even unto death, bore witness to what He had heard, but that also of One who had received the truth in a manner strictly corresponding to what the truth was. Secondly, He is **the first-born of the dead**. The designation is to be distinguished from that in Col. i. 18, **the first-born from the dead**, where our thoughts are directed rather to the Redeemer Himself than to those whom He leaves behind Him in the grave, whereas here we have the Redeemer as He has begun that resurrection-life in which He shall yet bring along with Him all the members of His Body. Thirdly, He is **the prince of the kings of the earth** (comp. chaps. xvii. 14, xix. 16). The meaning is not that He is one of them, although higher than they, but that He is exalted over them, that He rules them as their Prince. The 'earth' is to be understood here, as always in the Apocalypse, of the earth which is alienated from God, and its 'kings' are its greatest powers and potentates. Yet these the exalted Redeemer rules with the rule of Ps. ii. 9 and Rev. ii. 27. In the exercise of their greatest might they are in His hand: He subdues them, and constrains them to serve His purposes.

It has been often imagined that in the three designations employed we have a reference to the prophetical, the priestly, and the kingly offices of Christ. The supposition is improbable; for, in the immediately following doxology with its three members, the description given of the Redeemer does not correspond with these offices in this order of succession. In the three designations of this verse, therefore, we are to see not parallel offices of Christ, but successive stages of His work,—His life on earth, His glorification when He rose from the dead, and the universal rule upon which He entered when He sat down as King at the right hand of the Father.

The thought of the glorious dignity of the Person whom he has just mentioned now leads the Seer to burst forth, in the second part of his Salutation, into a doxology of adoring praise, in which the contemplation not so much of what Jesus is in Himself as of what we experience in Him is prominent. Three relations of the Lord to His people are spoken of. First, He **loveth us**. Not, as in the Authorised Version, He 'loved' us, as if the thoughts of St. John were mainly directed to Christ's work on earth; **but** He 'loveth' us. He loveth us now; **even** amidst the glory of His exalted state we are partakers of His love; and His love will give us all things. Secondly, He **loosed us** (not 'washed us') **from our sins in his blood**. It is complete salvation that is before the writer's eye, not simply the pardon of sin, but deliverance from its bondage. They who are 'loosed from their sins in' the blood of Christ are alike cleansed from the stain and defilement of sin, and are quickened and enfranchised in the participation of their Lord's Resurrection-life; 'being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life' (Rom. vi. 22). In the great Head to whom by faith they are united, they are united also to the Father, and are consecrated to Him in the free and joyful service in which Jesus gives Himself to the Father for evermore. Thirdly, He **made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father**. The words are in a certain measure parenthetical, the doxology which follows connecting itself directly with the clause immediately preceding them; but they do not on that account less forcibly express one of the greatest of all privileges bestowed upon believers. Particular attention ought to be paid both to the word 'kingdom' and to the relation in which it stands to 'priests.' It is not said that we are made 'kings,' a term nowhere applied to Christians in their individual capacity. We are made 'a kingdom,' yet not, as some would have it, a kingdom with which Christ is invested, but ourselves a kingdom, clothed in our corporate existence with royal dignity and honour. The regal glory is that of Him who has been set as King upon God's holy hill, but it extends to and glorifies that Body which is one with Him. Only in her collective capacity, however, in her oneness, in the harmonious co-operation of all her parts, is the Church such a kingdom as is here described, the eternal kingdom of an eternal Lord, for 'every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation' (Matt. xii. 25). 'We,' says the Seer, 'are not kings, but a kingdom.' The relation in which the word 'kingdom' stands to the word 'priests' is to be equally observed. From the collective word we pass to that which describes our individual position, and brings out its most distinctive and essential feature. We are 'priests,' to minister to one another, to plead for one another and for the world, to set forth before those less favoured than ourselves the praise and glory of God. Not for our selfish gratification, for our own personal enjoyment, has the 'kingdom' been bestowed on us, but that we may be God's ministers for the world's good. And this service belongs to every follower of Jesus. All Christians are 'a kingdom,' but in that kingdom, sharing its privileges, each Christian is a 'priest.' The same thought lies at the bottom of Ex. xix. 6 (comp. also 1 Pet. ii. 9); and the same order is exhibited in our Lord's own ministry. The glory of His kingship

upon earth consisted in His bearing perfect witness to the truth, with all that was implied in doing so (John xviii. 37). He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister: that was His glory; 'and the glory,' He says in His high-priestly prayer, 'which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them' (John xvii. 22). How important to be reminded of this at the very beginning of a book which is to describe in such exalted strains the triumphs of God's children, and from which they have so often gathered pleas for selfish and worldly aggrandisement!

To One in Himself so exalted in His threefold greatness; to One who has done so much for us in the threefold actings of His love, we may well ascribe **the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.**

Ver. 7. The third part of the Salutation follows, closely associated with that Redeemer to whom the doxology of the second part had been addressed. The thought of Jesus is not exhausted by the mention of what He *had done*. Another great truth is connected with Him,—that He will come again, to complete His victory, and to be acknowledged by all in His glory and His majesty. **Behold, he cometh with the clouds.** May it not be that these clouds are not the mere clouds of the sky, but those clouds of Sinai, of the Shechinah, of the Transfiguration, of the Ascension, which are the recognised signs of Deity? This is the coming prophesied of in Dan. vii. 13 and Mark xiv. 62 (also of Matt. xxvi. 64, though a different preposition is there used); and in both cases, it ought to be strictly observed, it is a coming to judgment.—**And every eye shall see him,** not the eyes only of those who shall then be alive upon the earth, as it would thus be impossible to explain the mention of those who pierced Him, but the eyes of all who, in any age and of any nation, have rejected His redemption (cp. what is said below on the meaning of the word 'see').—**Even they that pierced him.** The reference is undoubtedly to John xix. 34, 37, and to Zech. xii. 10 (cp. note on John xix. 37); and this, combined with the facts, that in the passage of the prophet the Jews are the representatives of the whole human race; that it was a Roman soldier, not a Jew, though at the instigation of the Jews, who pierced the side of Jesus as He hung upon the cross; and that the relative employed is not the simple but the compound relative—whosoever—is sufficient to show that the persons referred to are not the Jews only, but they who in any age have identified themselves with the spirit of the Saviour's murderers. The reader ought not to pass these words without remembering that the piercing of the Saviour's side is spoken of by St. John alone of all the Evangelists, nay, not only spoken of, but that too with an emphasis which shows how deep was the importance he attached to it (John xix. 34-37). A clear trace of the importance of the fact in the writer's mind is likewise presented to us here.—**And all the tribes of the earth shall wail over him.** It is important to notice the word 'tribes,' the same word as that applied to the true Israel in chaps. v. 5, vii. 4-8, xxi. 12. The 'tribes' of Israel are the figure by which God's believing people, whether Jew or Gentile, are represented. In like manner all unbelievers are now set before us as 'tribes,' the mocking counterpart of the true Israel of God. They are the tribes of the 'earth,' *i.e.* not the earth in its merely neutral sense, but as opposed to heaven, as the scene of worldliness and evil. Thus in Matt. xxiv. 30, 31, 'all the tribes of the earth' are distinguished from the 'elect.' In neither of the two clauses, then, now under consideration have we any distinction between Jew and Gentile. The same persons are thought of, numerically and personally, in both. The distinction lies in this, that, according to a method of conception common in the Apocalypse, the same persons are looked at first under a Jewish, and next under a Gentile, point of view. The **Yea** which follows seems to be the testimony of the Lord Himself to what had just been told of Him (comp. chap. xxii. 20). The **Amen** is the answer of believers to the statement made.

We have still to ask, In what sense shall all 'see' and 'wail'? The latter word must determine the interpretation of the former. Is this a wailing of penitence or of dismay? or is it both, so that the wailers embrace alike the sinful world and the triumphant Church? We cannot suppose the same word used to denote wailings of a kind so entirely distinct from and opposite to one another; and the following additional reasons appear to limit the wailing spoken of to that of the impenitent and godless:—(1) This is the proper meaning of the word, and it is so used in chap. xviii. 9. (2) Such is also its meaning in that prophecy of our Lord upon which the Apocalypse is moulded (Matt. xxiv.). (3) It corresponds with the idea of the tribes of the earth, which do not include the godly. (4) Throughout this book the godly and ungodly are separated from each other. There is a gulf between them which cannot be passed. If this be the meaning of the second clause, that of the first must correspond to it, and the 'seeing' must be that of shame and confusion of face. The whole sentence thus corresponds with the object of the book, and the coming of Jesus is described as that of One who comes to overthrow His adversaries and to complete His triumph.

Ver. 8. This conclusion is strengthened by the words of the eighth verse, in which the emphasis lies upon **the Almighty,** thus bringing into prominence that all-powerful might in which Jesus goes forth to be victorious over His enemies. It is Christ, 'the Lord,' who speaks, and who says that He is **the Alpha and the Omega;** that He is **God** (for we are not to read the two words Lord God together); that He is **he which is, and which was, and which is to come;** and that all culminates in His title **the Almighty.** To suppose that the words are spoken by the Father is to introduce a thought not strictly corresponding to what precedes. The unity of the whole passage is only preserved by ascribing them to the exalted and glorified Redeemer. The words are thus highly important as witnessing to the true Divinity of Christ, and in particular to His possessing the same eternity as the Almighty.

Thus, in the assurance that the Lord will come in His might for the accomplishment of His plans, the Seer is prepared to enter upon a description of the visions which he had enjoyed.

CHAPTER I. 9–20.

The Introductory Vision.

9 I JOHN, who also[1] am your brother, and companion in[2]
tribulation, and in the[3] kingdom and [a]patience of[4] Jesus [a] Lu. xxi. 19.
Christ,[5] was in the isle that is called Patmos, for[6] the word of
10 God, and for[7] the testimony of Jesus Christ.[8] I was in the
[b] Spirit on the Lord's day, and[9] heard behind me a great voice, [b] Ezek. ii. 2.
11 as of a [c] trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and [c] Ex. xix. 19.
the last: and,[9] What thou seest, write in a book,[10] and send *it*
unto the seven churches which are in Asia;[11] unto Ephesus,
and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and
12 unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And
I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being[12]
13 turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of
the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the[13] Son of man, clothed
with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps[14]
14 with a golden girdle. His head and *his* hairs[15] *were* white like
[d] wool,[16] as white[17] as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of [d] Dan. vii. 9.
15 fire; and his feet like unto fine[18] brass, as if they[19] burned in
a furnace; and his voice as the sound[20] of many [e] waters. [e] Ps. xciii. 4.
16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth
went[21] a sharp two-edged sword:[22] and his countenance *was*[23]
17 as the sun shineth in his strength.[24] And when I saw him, I
fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me,
18 saying unto me,[25] Fear not; I am the first and the last: *I am*
he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for ever-
more, Amen; and have[26] the keys of hell and of death.[27]
19 Write[28] the things which thou hast seen,[29] and the things
20 which are,[30] and the things which shall be hereafter;[31] the
mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in[32] my right
hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are
the[33] angels of the seven churches: and the seven[34] candle-
sticks which thou sawest[35] are the seven churches.

[1] *omit* also [2] and fellow-partaker in the [3] *omit* in the
[4] which are in [5] *omit* Christ [6] because of [7] *omit* for
[8] *add* I [9] *omit from* I am . . . and, [10] roll
[11] *omit* which are in Asia [12] having [13] a
[14] and girt round at the breasts [15] And his head and hairs
[16] were white as white wool [17] *omit* as white [18] white [19] *omit* if they
[20] a voice [21] *omit* went [22] a sword two-edged, sharp, proceeding forth
[23] omit *was* [24] power [25] *omit* unto me
[26] *after* the last: *read*, and the Living One; and I became dead, and, behold,
I am alive for evermore; and I have [27] keys of death and Hades
[28] *add* therefore [29] sawest [30] both the things which are
[31] shall come to pass after these things [32] upon
[33] *omit* the [34] *omit* seven [35] *omit* which thou sawest

CONTENTS. We are introduced to a vision of the Saviour, in that light in which He is peculiarly presented to us in the Apocalypse—the Head of His Church, the great High Priest and King of His people. From Him the Seer receives the commission to deliver His message to the Church.

Ver. 9. Again the apocalyptic writer, after the manner of the prophets, especially Daniel, names himself (comp. Dan. vii. 15, viii. 1, 15, ix. 2, x. 2, xii. 5). But he is not only a prophet: he is not less personally concerned than those to wh m he writes in the revelation which he is t› declare. He is their **brother**, and he is a **fellow-partaker** with them in the things of which he speaks. In what a touching light does St. John thus present himself to the afflicted Church! But the words which he uses are more than touching. They take for granted that all who read are feeling as acutely as himself; and such is the nature of the Apocalypse, that, unless we either are or put ourselves as far as possible into his position, we shall never understand the book. For an afflicted Church, and not for a Church in worldly prosperity and ease, it has its meaning. The things spoken of by the apostle are three in number, and they are bound together into one conception, although the first is the main particular to be dwelt on, the other two being only additional and explicative (comp. on John xiv. 6). The first is tribulation, 'the tribulation' through which the followers of the Lord in every age must pass; but the mention of it is followed by that of the **kingdom**, the present, not the future kingdom; and the **patience**, the stedfast endurance which holds out to the end amidst all sorrow, the patience of which we are so strikingly told by our Lord in Luke xxi. 19, that in it we shall 'win our souls' (later reading; comp. Revised Version). These, too, are **in Jesus**,—not 'of' Jesus as if only His spirit were made ours, nor 'for' Jesus as if only we were suffering and rejoicing and enduring for His sake, but 'in' Him, believers being one with Him, and therefore partakers of His trials, His royalty, and His heavenly strength.—**Was**; literally, 'became,' passed into, an expre-sion, be it noted, that supports, though it could not have originated, the tradition of the writer's banishment.—**In the isle that is called Patmos**, a small and barren island in the Egean Sea, such as those to which it was customary at that period to banish prisoners. To this island it is generally supposed that St. John was exiled in the time of the Roman Emperor Domitian, and the following words are in harmony with the supposition that this was the explanation of his being there.—**Because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.** The 'word of God' is that which comes from God, the 'testimony of Jesus' that which is given by Jesus; but they cannot be limited here, as at ver. 2, to the revelation of this book (comp. also chaps. vi. 9, xx. 4). All revelation may be so described.

Ver. 10. **Was**; literally, 'became,' see on ver. 9. It was not his ordinary condition (comp. Ezek. ii. 2).—**In the spirit.** The expression occurs four times in the book, each time at a great crisis in the development of the visions (chaps. i. 10, iv. 2, xvii. 3, xxi. 10). It denotes removal in thought from this material scene, elevation into the higher region of spiritual realities, transportation into the midst of the sights and sounds of the invisible world.—**On the Lord's day.** Certainly not the last day, the great day of judgment, known in the New Testament by a different expression, 'the day of the Lord,' and before which, not on which, the events of the Apocalypse take place, but the first day of the week (comp. the expression used by St. Paul, 'the Lord's Supper,' in 1 Cor. xi. 20). Yet the words are not to be regarded as a simple designation of the first day of the week in its distinction from the others. The nature and character of the day are to be kept particularly in view. It is the day of the 'Lord,' the risen and glorified Lord, the day of Him who, thus risen and glorified, had founded that Church against which no enemies shall prevail. Wrapt therefore in contemplation of the glory of this Lord; not simply with the peaceful influences of the day of rest diffused over his soul, but dwelling amidst the thoughts of that authority and power which are possessed by the risen Jesus at the right hand of the Father, St. John receives the revelation which is here communicated to him.

Thus, then, we have both the outward and the inward circumstances of the Seer; and it will be observed that they correspond closely to the condition of the Lord Himself. St. John is at once in a state of humiliation and of exaltation. He has the marks of suffering upon him, but he is also in possession of a glory which enables him to triumph over suffering: he is 'in Jesus.'

The vision follows, and the first part of it is the hearing of **a great voice as of a trumpet.** There can be little doubt that the trumpet spoken of is that so frequently alluded to in the Old Testament, the *Shophar*, the trumpet of war and judgment (see more fully on chap. viii. 2), not the trumpet of festal proclamation; therefore not merely (as most commentators) one with a strong and clear sound, but with a sound inspiring awe and terror, and corresponding in this respect to the distinguishing characteristic of the Lord in the further details of the vision.

Ver. 11. The first clauses of the verse in the Authorised Version must be removed, and the words of the voice begin with **what thou seest write in a roll.** Under the 'seeing' is included all that is to be written in the roll, not merely chaps. ii. and iii.; and the command to write is so given in the original as to show that it is urgent, and that it must be obeyed at once (chaps. i. 19, ii. 1, 8, 12, 18, iii. 1, 7, 14, xiv. 13, xix. 9, xxi. 5).—When the roll is written it is to be sent **unto the seven churches** which are named. These are the seven churches already spoken of in ver. 4, and no reasonable doubt can be entertained that they represent the universal Church in all countries and ages; for (1) The Apocalypse is designed for all Christians (chap. i. 3); (2) There were other churches in Asia at the time, at all events those of Magnesia and Tralles, probably those also of Colossæ and Hierapolis. These two latter cities had indeed suffered from an earthquake before the Apocalypse was penned, but there is no reason to think that their churches had been wholly destroyed, or that, if destroyed for a time, they might not have been restored. Although, however, there were thus more than seven churches in Asia, this book, it will be observed, is addressed not to seven, but to 'the' seven (ver. 4). (3) We must bear in mind the importance of the number seven, which often occurs in the Apocalypse, and apparently nowhere in its merely literal sense. Here as elsewhere, therefore, it is to be typically understood, as an

emblem of the unity, amidst manifoldness, of that Church with which God makes His covenant. (4) The character in which the Redeemer is presented to these seven churches consists of a summary of particulars which are afterwards applied separately to the seven churches in chaps. ii. and iii. But the summary represents Jesus as a whole; and the natural inference is, that the seven churches constitute a whole also. (5) The symbolism of the whole book is thus preserved. On any other supposition than that we have here a representation of the whole Church of Christ, chaps. ii. and iii. must be regarded as simply historical, and the harmony of the Apocalypse is destroyed.

Ver. 12. The Seer naturally turns to see; and the first thing that strikes his eyes as the outer circle of the vision is **seven golden candlesticks**, each of them like the golden candlestick of the Tabernacle. That we have seven candlesticks instead of one points to the richness and fulness of the New Testament Dispensation in its contrast with the Old. The idea that we have before us only one candlestick with seven branches is to be rejected as alike inconsistent with the language of St. John and with the symbolism of the book. It is, besides, wholly unnecessary to think of only one candlestick for the sake of unity. The number seven is not less expressive of unity than unity itself.

Ver. 13. We have beheld the contents of the outer circle; but there is something more glorious within. In the midst of the seven golden candlesticks is One, not walking as in chap. ii. 1, but standing, who is **like unto a Son of man**, *i.e.* appears in human likeness. As in chap. xiv. 14, and John v. 27, the article 'the' is awanting, and ought not to be supplied. Besides which, the whole description shows that it is the Son of man Himself, not One 'like unto' Him, that is seen. Yet St. John does not say, 'I saw the Son of man,' for it is not in reality, but in vision, that he sees the Lord.

In the description given, the first thing mentioned is the Saviour's garb, **a garment down to the foot**. The description of Gabriel in Dan. x. 5 (comp. also Ezek. ix. 2, 3, 11) leaves little doubt as to the nature of the robe spoken of. It was a long white linen garment reaching to the feet, and worn by priests, or (1 Sam. xv. 27) by kings. It was thus not only a priestly but a royal robe.—In addition to this, the person seen was **girt round at the breasts with a golden girdle**. The supposition is often entertained that the place of this girdle, so much higher than the loins, indicates not action, but rest from toil. It may be greatly doubted if such a supposition is correct. The girding referred to in Luke xii. 35 presents no proper analogy to that now mentioned, being the girding up at the loins of the robe itself, so as to prevent its flowing to the feet. Here the girdle has no connection with the loins; and it seems rather to have been that worn by the priests when engaged in sacrifice. We learn from Josephus (comp. *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, ii. p. 702) that at such times it was their practice to wear a girdle about the body just below the arm-pits. The Son of man, therefore, is not here at rest, but is engaged in discharging the functions, whatever they are, which belong to Him as a Priest for ever. In chap. xv. 6 the angels with the seven last plagues are described as similarly girt. The priestly girdle under the Law was only of linen embroidered with gold (Ex. xxviii. 8). Here it is 'golden,' that is, wholly of gold in order to indicate the high dignity of the wearer and the exceeding riches of the blessings He bestows. The important question has still to be asked, whether in this dress we are to see the emblem only of priestly or of both kingly and priestly power. If we consider (1) That the more peculiar articles of the priests' dress, such as the mitre and the ephod, are not spoken of, but only such as were common to both priests and kings; (2) That in Dan. x. 5 and Isa. xxii. 21 we have the same specification associated with the exercise of the royal and governmental rather than the priestly office; and (3) That the idea of kingly power is embodied in those parts of the description which are yet to follow, we shall have no difficulty in answering the question. We have before us not only a Priest but a King, One who is already a Priest upon His throne, a Priest after the order of Melchizedec. But the thought of the King is prominent.

Vers. 14, 15. From the dress the Seer now proceeds to some characteristics of the personal appearance of Him whom he beholds in vision. **His head and hairs were white as white wool, as snow.** The head is not the forehead, but, as appears from the omission of the personal pronoun when the hair is mentioned, simply the head, with more especial reference to the hair; and the white wool and the snow are emblems of purity and holiness (comp. Ps. li. 7; Isa. i. 18), not of old age.—**His eyes were as a flame of fire**, penetrating into every dark recess of sin, not only discovering sin, but consuming it.—**And his feet like unto white brass burned in a furnace.** The word here used for 'white brass' is found elsewhere only at chap. ii. 18 of this book, where the part of the description now given is again made use of. It may perhaps have been a technical word of the workers in brass employed about Ephesus; or, what is still more probable, it may have been a mystical word compounded by the Seer himself, who would express, by its partly Greek partly Hebrew composition, that from the treading of these burning feet no ungodly of any nation shall escape.—Lastly, **And his voice as a voice of many waters.** The connection in chaps. xiv. 2, xix. 6, between 'many waters' and 'thunderings' at once points out the meaning of this figure. The voice is not simply loud and clear, but of irresistible strength and power, a voice the rebuke of which no enemy shall be able to withstand. All the features of the description, it will be observed, are those of majesty, terror, and judgment,—absolute purity, penetrating and consuming fire, the white heat of brass raised to its highest temperature in the furnace, the awful sound of many waters.

Ver. 16. From the personal appearance of the Redeemer, the Seer now passes to His equipment for His work, and that in three particulars. **And he had in his right hand seven stars.** In the writings of St. John the verb 'to have' denotes possession, and the 'right hand' is the hand of power, so that the Lord is here represented as possessing these seven stars, for their rule, protection, and guidance: 'No one shall pluck them out of My hand' (John x. 28). The stars are grasped 'in' His hand, to denote that

they are His property. When the idea is varied in ver. 20, the preposition is also changed,—they are then not 'in' but 'upon' his hand. The seven stars are further explained in ver. 20 to be 'the angels of the seven churches' (see on that verse).—The second particular mentioned is that of the sword. **Out of his mouth a sword, two-edged, sharp, proceeding forth.** The order of the words in the original, and the love of the Seer for the number three, seems to make it desirable to understand 'proceeding forth' as an attribute of the sword parallel to the other two, instead of connecting it directly with its noun in the sense, 'out of his mouth proceeded forth a sharp, two-edged sword.' The word here translated 'sword' occurs six times in the Apocalypse (chaps. i. 16, ii. 12, 16, vi. 8, xix. 15, 21), and only once in the rest of the New Testament (Luke ii. 35), but it is very frequently used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, particularly in Ezekiel. In Ezek. v. 1 it is associated with the attribute 'sharp.' In Ps. cxlix. 6 we have it connected with the epithet 'two-edged' or two-mouthed, the edge of the sword being considered as its mouth by which it devours (Isa. i. 20; cp. Heb. xi. 34, where the plural 'mouths' of the Greek leads to the thought of the two edges). The use of this figure in Scripture justifies the idea that there is here a reference to the Word of God which proceeds out of His mouth (Eph. vi. 17; Heb. iv. 12); but there is no thought of 'comforting' r of 'the grace and saving power of the Word.' Its destroying power is alone in view, that power by which it judges, convicts, and condemns the wicked. 'He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked' (Isa. xi. 4; cp. John xii. 48). Hence, accordingly, the various epithets here applied to the sword, all calculated to emphasize its destroying power,—two-edged, sharp, proceeding forth, the latter denoting that it is not at rest, but in the act of coming forth to execute its work.—**And his countenance as the sun shineth in his power.** The third particular of Christ's equipment. We might have expected this particular to be connected with the previous group describing the appearance of the Lord. Its introduction now as a part of Christ's equipment leads directly to the conclusion that we are to dwell mainly upon the power of the sun's rays as they proceed directly from that luminary. Hence, also, in all probability the particular Greek word used for 'countenance,'—not so much the face as the appearance of the face, the light streaming from it. The sun is thought of not at his rising, but in his utmost strength, with the scorching, intolerable power which marks him in the East at noonday.

It thus appears that, throughout the whole of this description, the 'Son of man' is one who comes to judgment. To Him all judgment has been committed (John v. 22, 27), and the time has arrived when He shall take unto Him His great power and reign. Nor are we to ask how it is possible that this should be the prominent aspect of the Lord in a book intended to strengthen and console His Church. That God is a God of judgment is everywhere throughout the prophets of the Old Testament the comfort of the righteous. They are now oppressed, but ere long they shall be vindicated; and there shall be a recompense unto those that trouble them.

Vers. 17, 18. The effect of the vision upon the Seer is now described. **I fell,** he says, **at his feet as dead** (cp. Ex. xxxiii. 20; Isa. vi. 5; Ezek. i. 28; Dan. viii. 17, x. 7, 8; Luke v. 8). The effect upon the present occasion is, however, greater than on any of those referred to in these other passages. It corresponds to the greater glory that has been witnessed. But St. John is immediately restored both by act and word. For the act cp. Dan. viii. 18, x. 10, 18; for the word, Matt. xiv. 27; Luke v. 10, xii. 32; John vi. 20, xii. 15. The **right hand** is the all-powerful hand in which the churches are held (ver. 16); and no doubt the Seer is at the same time set upon his feet (cp. Ezek. i. 28, ii. 1, 2).

But this was not all. The Redeemer further reveals Himself as the Lord who through humiliation and death had attained to glory and victory. In the words in which He does so, reaching to the end of ver. 18, it seems to be generally allowed that we have three clauses, but commentators differ as to their arrangement. Without discussing the opinions of other., it may be enough to say that the best distribution appears to be as follows:—(1) I am the first and the last and the Living One; (2) and I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore; (3) and I have the keys of death and of Hades. (1) **I am the first and the last** (cp. ver. 8, ii. 8, xxii. 13). It is the Divine attribute of eternal and unchangeable existence that is spoken of; not I am the first in glory, the last in humiliation, but I am the One preceding all, embracing all, by whom all things were made, in whom all things consist, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever (cp. Isa. xli. 4, xliv. 6, xlviii. 12), **and the Living One.** He is not merely alive, but He has life in Himself, self-possessed, absolute life (John i. 4, v. 26). Thus in these epithets we have the Divine, eternal pre-existence of the Son, what He was before the Eternal 'Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us.' (2) **I became dead.** The Divine Son emptied Himself of His glory, and stooped as man to death itself. All this is included in 'became.' —**And behold, I am alive for evermore,** words which ought not to be separated from those immediately preceding them; for, according to the conception of St. John, the Resurrection and Glorification of our Lord are to be taken along with His humiliation as parts of one great whole (cp. note on John xx. under Contents). We are thus carried a step further forward than in the previous part of our Lord's declaration of Himself. (3) **and I have the keys of death and of Hades.** The two words 'death' and 'Hades' are combined, as in chap. xx. 13, 14, and both are conceived of as a fortress or place of imprisonment. Hence the figure of the 'keys' (Isa. xxxviii. 10; Matt. xvi. 18; cp. also chap. ix. 1, xx. 1). Neither 'death' nor 'Hades' is to be understood in a neutral sense. The one is not simply death, but death as a terrible power from which the righteous have escaped; the other is a region peopled, not by both the righteous and the wicked, but by those alone who have not conquered death. Both words thus describe the condition of all who are out of Christ, and are not partakers of His victory. Yet, however they may be opposed to Him, He

has the keys of the prison within which they are confined; He can keep them there, or He can deliver them at His will. The third part of the declaration thus carries us further than the second, and introduces us to the thought of Christ's everlasting and glorious rule as King in Zion. All the three parts appropriately follow the words 'Fear not.' They tell of the Divine pre-existence of the Son; of death endured but conquered in His Resurrection; of irresistible power now exercised over His and the Church's enemies. They are thus supplementary to the description which had been given of the Son of man in vers. 13–16, and they include a revelation of the fact that He who is judgment to His enemies is mercy to His own.

Ver. 19. **Write therefore,** not simply in continuation of the 'write' of ver. 11, or because the apostle has recovered from his fear, but 'Write, seeing that I am what I have now revealed Myself to be.' The following clauses of this verse are attended with great difficulty, and very various opinions have been entertained regarding them. Here it is only possible to remark that **the things which thou sawest,** although most naturally referred to the vision of vers. 10–18, are not necessarily confined to what concerns Jesus *in Himself.* In these verses He is described as the Head of His Church, as One who has His Church summed up in Him; and we are thus led not merely to the thought of His individuality, but to that of the fortunes of His people. This being so, the following clauses of the verse are to be regarded as a resolution of the vision into the two parts in which it finds its application to the history of the Church, so that we ought to translate **both the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass after these things.** 'The things which are' then give expression to the present condition of the Church, as she follows her Lord in humiliation and suffering in the world; 'the things which shall come to pass after these things' to the glory that awaits her when, all her trials over, she shall enter upon her reward in the world to come. The verse, therefore, consists of two parts rather than three, although the second part is again divided into two. There appears to be no sufficient reason for rendering the second clause of the verse 'what they are' instead of 'the things which are.' The plural verb in that clause is better accounted for by the thought of the mingled condition, partly sorrow and defeat, partly joy and triumph, of the Church on earth, while hereafter it shall be wholly joy and wholly triumph.

Ver. 20. **The mystery of the stars which thou sawest upon my right hand.** It is generally agreed that the word 'mystery' here depends on 'write,' and that it is in apposition with the 'things which thou sawest.' The word denotes what man cannot know by his natural powers, or without the help of Divine revelation. It occurs again in chaps. x. 7, xvii. 5, 7; and its use there, as well as its present context, forbids the supposition that it refers merely to the *fact* that the seven stars are angels of the seven churches, or that the seven candlesticks are seven churches. It includes the whole *history and fortunes* of these churches. All that concerns them is a part of the 'mystery' which is now to be written, and which the saints shall understand, though the world cannot. We may further notice that, in the second clause of the first half of this verse, **and the seven golden candlesticks,** the last word is not, as we might have expected, dependent upon 'mystery.' It is in the accusative not the genitive case; and would thus seem to depend upon the verb 'sawest,' and to be subordinate to the first clause, though closely connected with it (comp. John ii. 12, xiv. 6). If so, the 'seven stars' are the prominent part of the mystery, thus illustrating the unity of the Church with the Saviour Himself, for He is 'the bright, the morning star' (chap. xxii. 16). Further also we may notice the 'upon' prefixed to 'my right hand' instead of 'in' as in ver. 16. Surely, in spite of the commentators, there is a difference. The Seer beholds the churches 'in' the hand of their Lord as His absolute property and in His safe keeping. The Lord Himself beholds them 'upon' His right hand, in a more upright and independent position: they are churches which He is about to send forth to struggle in His place.

An explanation of what the stars and the candlesticks are is now given. **The seven stars are angels of the seven churches.** It seems doubtful if stars are 'in all the typical language of Scripture symbols of lordship and authority ecclesiastical or civil' (Trench). They are often emblems of light (Num. xxiv. 17; Ps. cxlviii. 3; Jer. xxxi. 35; Ezek. xxxii. 7; Dan. xii. 3; Joel ii. 10, iii. 15; 2 Pet. i. 19; Rev. ii. 28, xxii. 16), so that it cannot at least be inferred from the use of the word that the 'angels' are persons in authority. What they are is more doubtful, and the most various opinions have been entertained regarding them. Several of these may be set aside without much difficulty. They are not ideal messengers of the churches, supposed to be sent on a mission to the Seer. He would then have replied *by* them, not *to* them. They are not the officials known as angels or messengers of the synagogue. Such an office is too subordinate to answer the conditions of the case, and there is no proof that it had been transferred to the Christian Church. They are not the guardian angels of the churches, for, instead of protecting, they represent the churches, and they are spoken of in the epistles which follow as chargeable with their sins. Two interpretations remain of wider currency or of higher authority. They are thought to be the Bishops or presiding ministers of the churches. But, even supposing that the Episcopal constitution of the Church at this early date could be established on other grounds, 'it is difficult to see how a personage whose name (angel, one sent forth) implies departure from a particular locality should be identified with the resident governor of the Church' (*Saul of Tarsus,* p. 143); nor could a Bishop be appropriately commended for the virtues, or condemned for the sins, of his flock. The interpretation of some of the oldest commentators on the Apocalypse is the best. Angels of a church are a method of expressing the church itself, the church being spoken of as if it were concentrated in its angel or messenger. In other words, the angel of a church is the moral image of the church as it strikes the eye of the observer, that presentation of itself which it sends up to the view of its King and Governor. There is much in the style of thought marking the Apocalypse to favour this view, for the leading persons spoken of in the book, and even the different departments of nature referred to in it, have each its 'angel' God proclaims His judgments by angels (chaps

xiv. 6, 8, 9, xvii. 1, xviii. 1, 21); He executes them by angels (chaps. viii. 2, xv. 1, 6); He seals His own by angels (chap. vii. 3); He even addresses the Son by an angel (chap. xiv. 15). The Son in like manner acts by an angel (chap. xx. 1); and reveals His truth by an angel (chaps. i. 1, xxii. 6, 16). Michael has his angels (chap. xii. 7); the dragon has his angels (chap. xii. 7, 9); the waters, fire, the winds, and the abyss have each its angel (chaps. xvi. 5, xiv. 18, vii. 1, ix. 11). In some of these instances it may be said that the angels are real beings, but in others it is hardly possible to think so. The method of expression seems to rest upon the idea that everything has its angel, its messenger by whom it communicates its feelings, and through whom it comes in contact with the external world. The angels here spoken of are, therefore, not so much ideal representatives of the churches, as a mode of thought by which the churches are conceived of when they pass out of their absolute condition into intercourse with, and action upon, others. Perhaps the same mode of speaking may be seen in Dan. x. 20, 21, xii. 1, where Persia and Grecia are represented by angels.

With the view now taken the equivalent designation 'stars' agrees much better than the supposition that these stars are persons in authority. When it is said of the Son of man that He has the 'seven stars upon His right hand,' it is much more natural to think that we have here a symbol of the churches themselves than of their rulers; and in chap. xii. 1 the twelve stars are not persons, the number twelve being simply the number of the Church. It may indeed be argued as an objection to the above reasoning, that it is immediately added in this verse that **the candlesticks are the seven churches**, and that we shall thus have two figures for the same object. But between the figures there is an instructive difference confirmatory of all that has been said; for the 'star' represents the Church as she gives light in the firmament of heaven, as she shines before the world for the world's good; the candlestick represents her as having her Divine life nourished in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High. The one is the Church in action, the other the Church in her inner life; and hence, probably, the mention of the former before the latter, for throughout the Apocalypse it is with the working, struggling Church that we have to do. Hence also in ver. 13 the Son of man is 'in the midst of the candlesticks;' while the stars are 'upon His right hand' (ver. 20), the hand that is stretched out for acting and for manifesting His glory to the world.

CHAPS. II., III.—THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

CHAPTER II. 1-7.

1. *The Epistle to Ephesus.*

1 UNTO the angel of the church of[1] Ephesus write; These things saith [a]he that holdeth[2] the seven stars in his right hand, who[3] walketh in the midst of the seven golden
2 candlesticks; I know [b]thy works, and thy labour,[4] and thy[5] patience, and how[6] thou canst not [c]bear them which are[7] evil: [8] and thou hast tried[9] them which say they are[10] apostles,
3 [d]and[11] are not, and hast found[12] them liars: [13] and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and
4 hast not fainted.[14] Nevertheless I have *somewhat*[15] against
5 thee, because[16] thou hast left[17] thy first [e]love. Remember therefore from whence thou art[18] fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will[19] come unto thee quickly,[20] and will remove[21] thy candlestick out of his[22] place, except thou repent.
6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds[23] of the [f]Nico-
7 laitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear

[a] Ch. i. 16, 20.
[b] 1 Thes. i. 3.
[c] Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22.
[d] Acts xx. 30; 3 Jo. 9.
[e] Jer. ii. 2.
[f] Vers. 14, 15.

[1] in [2] *add* fast [3] he that [4] toil [5] *omit* thy
[6] that [7] *omit* them which are [8] *add* men [9] didst try
[10] them that call themselves [11] *add* they [12] didst find [13] false
[14] And thou hast patience, and thou didst bear because of my name, and thou hast not grown weary [15] omit *somewhat* [16] that [17] didst let go
[18] hast [19] *omit* will [20] *omit* quickly [21] move [22] its [23] works

what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give[24] to eat of[25] the tree of life, which is in the midst of[26] the [f] paradise of God. [f] Gen. iii. 24.

[24] I will give to him [25] out of [26] *omit* the midst of

CONTENTS. Reserving any remarks to be made upon the general structure of the Epistles to the seven churches of Asia, and upon their relation to one another, we only notice at present their position in the Apocalypse as a whole. The two chapters containing them form the second great section of the book, and their aim is to set before us a representation of that Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose struggle and victory it is the main object of the apostle to describe. We have already seen that the seven churches here spoken of represent the one universal Church. The Epistles addressed to them constitute the introduction of that Church upon the field of history. The great Head of the Church has been brought before us in chap. i.; and now we have the Church herself. We must learn to know her in her calling and her condition before we can understand her fortunes.

Ver. 1. The first church addressed is that of Ephesus, the city in which St. John himself is reported, according to the unanimous tradition of Christian antiquity, to have spent the closing period of his life. Yet, even if we adopt the later date for the composition of the Apocalypse, we can hardly suppose that we are to find in this circumstance the reason why Ephesus is first mentioned. It is more reasonable to think that the importance of that church in itself, together, it may be, with the special particulars of its internal condition, determined the place which is now assigned to it. Ephesus was the most influential city of Asia Minor, the meeting-place of Eastern and Western thought, renowned not only for its commercial relations, but for that magnificent temple of Diana which was looked upon as one of the wonders of the world (Acts xix. 27). St. Paul showed his sense of its importance by spending in it no less than three years of his busy life, and by using it as one of the great centres of his missionary labours. The angel of the church, that is, as we have seen, not its bishop or presiding pastor, but the church itself viewed as the appointed interpreter and messenger of Christ's purposes to the world, is now addressed by St. John.

First of all we have a description of Him from whom the message comes, taken from the description already given of Him in chap. i., and more especially from vers. 13 and 16. There is a peculiar fitness in the selection for the first Epistle of these, the obviously prominent characteristics of the Lord as He is brought before us in that chapter; but there is nothing to lead us to think that the Church at Ephesus, viewed by itself, is more representative of the universal Church than any other of the seven. Two points of difference between the description of the Redeemer here and in chap. i. are worthy of notice:—(1) The substitution of the word **holdeth fast** for the word 'hath' of the latter (ver. 16). The first of these words is much stronger than the second, and denotes to retain firmly in the grasp (comp. chaps. ii. 25, iii. 11). It is therefore employed in the present instance with peculiar propriety, when the aim of the Seer is to set forth not so much the glory of the Lord Himself, as the power with which He retains His people under His care, so that, even when decay has begun to mark them, they shall not be allowed finally to perish (John x. 28). (2) The word **walketh** for the simple being or standing of chap. i. 13, in order to indicate not merely that Christ's people surround and worship Him, but that He is engaged in observing and protecting them. Not one of their backslidings or errors escapes His notice: they have no weakness which He will not strengthen, no want which He will not supply.

Ver. 2. The address to the Church follows, embracing vers. 2–6. The first part of it, extending to the close of ver. 3, seems to contain seven points of commendation:—(1) **I know thy works, and thy toil and patience.** By the word 'know' we are to understand not approbation, but simply experimental knowledge; and by 'works,' not hero-deeds, but simply the whole tone and conduct of the church's life, together with the outward manifestation of what she was. These works are then resolved into two parts; 'toil,' which is more than labour in the service of the Lord; and 'patience,' which is more than the passive virtue commonly represented by that word. The meaning would be better expressed by 'endurance,'—the strong, firm, and manly bearing of all suffering inflicted by a hostile world for the sake of Christ.—(2) **And that thou canst not bear evil men.** The 'evil men' referred to are a different class from those spoken of in the following clause, and they are thought of as a burden too heavy to be borne. The Ephesian church had a holy impatience of those who, by their evil deeds, brought disgrace upon the Christian name, and she is commended for it.—(3) **And thou didst try them that call themselves apostles.** These persons had made a special claim to be apostles (comp. 2 Cor. xi. 13), even in all probability disowning St. John himself. But the Ephesian Christians had 'tried,' and in trying had discovered their false pretensions. The Greek word here used for 'try' is different from that found in 1 John iv. 1, where we read, 'Believe not every spirit, but prove (not, as in the Authorised Version, 'try') the spirits, whether they are of God.' A distinction has been drawn between the two, the latter being referred to faith and doctrine, the former to works; and the distinction has been thought to find support in ver. 6. But the false teachers there spoken of are not the same as those mentioned in the clause before us. The distinction seems rather to lie in this, that 'try' expresses simply the trial, with the superadded thought of disinclination to the persons tried; that 'prove' expresses the bringing forth of solid worth by trial (comp. 1 Cor. xvi. 3; 2 Cor. viii. 8; 1 Tim. iii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 7). Here, therefore, 'prove' could not be used. The Ephesian church knew what these deceivers would show themselves to be, and turned from them with the instinct of the Christian heart before it

put them to a formal proof.—And they are not, not as in the Authorised Version with the omission of the word 'they.' The addition of the clause, when compared with 1 John iii. 1, affords an interesting illustration of the style of the apostle, for 'and such we are' ought there to be inserted in the text (comp also chap. iii. 9).—(4) **And didst find them false** (comp. chap. iii. 9; 1 John i. 6).

There is no evidence to show that false teachers such as these could have existed only in the very earliest period of the Christian Church, that they cannot be assigned to the closing years of the first century, and that the Apocalypse must therefore have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem. The words of St. Paul to the Ephesian Presbyters in Acts xx. 29 lead rather to the belief that the manifestation there spoken of would not take place until at least most of the apostles had been removed from this earthly scene.

Ver. 3. (5) **And thou hast patience.** The 'patience' spoken of is the stedfast endurance already mentioned in ver. 2, but the possession of the grace is enhanced by the use of the verb 'have,'—thou *hast* it, it is thine.—(6) **And thou didst bear because of my name.** They had not borne with evil men (ver. 2); and yet, in not bearing them, in rejecting them, and in the struggle which was involved in doing so, they had had something to bear; they had borne the burden laid upon them because of the 'name' of Jesus, because of that revelation of the grace and love of God which had been given them in Him (comp. on John xiv. 13, 14).—(7) **And thou hast not grown weary.** For the use of the word 'grow weary,' comp. John iv. 6. In ver. 2 they had been commended for their 'toil;' but now a step is taken in advance, they had not 'grown weary' in it. How hard the duty, and how high the grace!

Such are the seven points in which the Ephesian church is commended; and, if we are right in considering them as seven, it will follow that the fourth, 'didst find them false,' is the leading one of the seven; or, in other words, that the chief point of commendation in the state of the Christians at Ephesus is their instinctive discernment and rejection of false teachers, and their zeal for the true doctrine of Christ as handed down by His commissioned and inspired apostles. Around this all else that in their case was worthy of commendation centred. Here was the 'toil' that never wearied, the 'endurance' that never failed, the 'bearing' of that bitter cross which consisted, as it did so largely in the case of our Lord, in contending against the 'grievous wolves' that had entered into God's heritage, and were snatching and scattering the sheep (John x. 12). The first 'work' of Christ, to maintain God's true revelation of Himself against selfish error, appears in the Ephesian church.

Ver. 4. Commendation has been bestowed; the deserved blame that had been incurred now follows: **Nevertheless I have against thee that thou didst let go thy first love.** The Authorised Version is here materially injured by the insertion of the word 'somewhat,' to which there is nothing in the original to correspond. The declension was a serious and not a slight one,—the letting go the 'kindness of her youth,' the 'love of her espousals' (Jer. ii. 2), the love with which the church had met her Lord 'in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart' (Cant. iii. 11). Nothing but the love of the bride can satisfy the Bridegroom; all zeal for His honour, if He is to value it, must flow from love, and love must feed its flame. There is no contradiction between the state now described and that in vers. 2 and 3. Nor is there any need to think that these latter verses apply only to the 'angel' as if he were a distinct personality, while this verse applies to the church at large. The history of the Christian Church has been too full of zeal without love to justify any doubt as to the verisimilitude of the picture. Let the times immediately subsequent to the successful struggle against Arianism, and again to the Reformation in Germany, testify to the fact.

Ver. 5. The exhortation to the church now follows in three parts:—(1) **Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen**; her first condition being regarded as a height; (2) **and repent**, by contrasting thy present with thy former state; (3) **and do the first works**; for it is the duty of the church to 'abide' in Christ: 'Even as the Father hath loved Me,' says Jesus Himself, 'I also have loved you; *abide ye* in My love' (John xv. 9). 'Works' are here to be understood in that widest sense of the word peculiar to St. John. The Lord does not bid His Church act as if acting were everything and feeling nothing. Feeling is rather the thing mainly thought of. There was no want of action: what was needed was the love which alone makes action valuable (cp. 1 Cor. xiii.).—**or else I come unto thee**; not the final judgment, or the Second Coming of the Lord; for, in that case, we should hardly have had the words 'unto thee' attached to the warning, but a special coming in judgment, an earnest and symbol of the great Coming at the last.—**And will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.** The removal of the church's candlestick denotes removal from her high standing and privileges in the sanctuary of God. There is nothing here of what has been described as simply 'the removal of the candlestick, not the extinction of the candle; judgment for some, but that very judgment the occasion of mercy for others.' The word 'move' is in the Apocalypse a word of judgment (cp. chap. vi. 14), and there is no thought of anything else in the warning given. Surely also, it may be remarked in passing, the warning distinctly shows us that the 'angel' of the church cannot possibly be its bishop. '*Thy* candlestick!' where is the Church spoken of as if she belonged to any of her office-bearers? She is always the Church of Christ. Contrast with 'thy candlestick' 'My sheep,' 'My lambs' (John xxi. 15-17).

Ver. 6. The Lord cannot leave them without a fresh word of commendation. **But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.** Who the persons thus referred to were we shall best learn at ver. 15. In the meantime it is enough to say that we have here more than a mere repetition of what had been said already at ver. 2; and that the last words, 'which I also hate,' appear to be added partly at least for the sake of bringing out the fact that, notwithstanding the declension of the Ephesian Christians, there was still one point on which their Lord and they were similarly minded.

Ver. 7. A promise is to be added to the main body of the Epistle, but before it is given we have

a general exhortation to men to listen. **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.** These words are found in all the seven Epistles, but with a different position in some of them as compared with others. In the first three they occur in the body of the letter, immediately before the promise to him that overcometh: in the last four they are introduced at the end. No student of the Apocalypse will doubt that this difference is designed, and that although he may be unable to say what the design is. In the case of the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls, we meet the same division of seven into its constituent parts three and four, only that in each of these the line of demarcation is at the close of the first four, not, as in the present instance, at the close of the first three. Nor does it seem difficult to understand this division, for four is the number of the earth, and the judgments relating to it are thus naturally four. It is not so easy to see why in the seven Epistles the number three should take precedence. Perhaps it may be because three is the number of God; and because, by the arrangement adopted, the Divine aspect of the Church in her existence considered in itself is brought out with a force which would otherwise have been wanting (see closing remarks on chap. iii.). Jewish feeling, so much appealed to by numbers and their arrangement, may have been alive to this in a manner that we can hardly understand. Whether the above explanation be satisfactory or not, the fact itself is both interesting and important. It throws light upon the measure of artificiality which appears in the structure of the Apocalypse, and is thus a help in its interpretation.—**To him that overcometh.** The expression is a characteristic one with St John. It occurs in each of the seven Epistles, as also in chap. xxi. 7. In chap. iii. 21 it is used of Christ Himself (cp. also chap. xii. 11; John xvi. 33; 1 John ii. 13, v. 4, 5).—**I will give to him to eat out of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.** For the tree of life cp. chap. xxii. 2, 14, 19. What victorious believers eat is 'out of' the tree of life, not something that grows upon it, its branches, or leaves, or flowers, or fruit. The particular preposition used in the original carries us to the thought of what is most intimately connected with the tree, to the thought of its very heart and substance. For the idea of eating, cp. John vi. 51. The question is naturally asked, What are we to understand by this 'tree of life'? and different answers have been given. By some it is supposed to be the Gospel, by others the Holy Spirit; while several of the later commentators on this book suppose it to be that eternal life, with all the means of sustaining it, which comes from Christ. The true answer seems to be that it is Christ Himself. Nor is it any reply to this to say that in chap. xxii. 2 we have not one tree but many, for the tree of life there spoken of is really one; or that the Giver must be different from the gift, for the highest gift of the Lord is the Incarnate Lord Himself, 'in whom,' says St. Paul, 'dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily' (Col. ii. 9); 'in' whom, says St. John, 'is life,' and 'out of' whom His people have received their life and 'grace for grace' (John i. 16). (Cp. on ver. 28.) At the same time this view is confirmed by the use of the preposition 'out of.' Who but the Lord Jesus Christ is that fulness 'out of' which all believers eat and live?

There may be a correspondence intended between the promise of 'eating' and the victory over the Nicolaitans, one of whose characteristics was that they 'ate things sacrificed to idols' (ver. 14). Those who eat of the table of devils cannot eat of the Lord's table (1 Cor. x. 21). They must share the exclusion from the tree of life of fallen Adam and his fallen seed. But the faithful who, like the Second Adam, and in His might, refuse the devil's dainties (Ps. xvi. 4; Matt. iv. 3), obtain in deepest truth the privilege from which our first parent was excluded (Gen. iii. 24).

CHAPTER II. 8–11.

2. *The Epistle to Smyrna.*

8 AND unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith [a] the first and the last, which was [1] dead, and [a] Ch. i. 18.
9 is alive; [2] I know thy works, and [3] tribulation, and [4] poverty, (but thou art [b] rich,) and *I know* [5] the blasphemy of them which [b] Mat. vi. 20; Jas. ii. 5.
say they [6] are Jews, and [7] are not, but *are* the [8] synagogue of
10 Satan. Fear none of those [9] things which thou shalt [10] [c] suffer: [c] Lu. xii. 4, 5
behold, the devil shall [11] cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation [12] ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a [13] [d] crown of life. [d] Ps. xxi. 3, 4

[1] became [2] rose to life [3] *omit* works, and
[4] *add* thy [5] omit *I know* [6] that they themselves
[7] *add* they [8] a [9] Fear not the [10] art about to
[11] is about to [12] a tribulation of [13] the

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not [14] be hurt of the [e] second death.

[e] Ch xx. 14

[14] in no wise

Ver. 8. The second church addressed is that of Smyrna, a city situated a little to the north of Ephesus, and in the same province of Asia Minor. Smyrna was one of the most prosperous and wealthy cities of Asia, lying in the midst of a rich and fertile region, and enjoying peculiar facilities for commerce. Its main worship was that of Bacchus, and, as a natural consequence, drunkenness and immorality were extremely prevalent.

Again the Epistle opens with a description of Him from whom it is sent. The description is taken from chap. i. 17, 18. For the rendering, **rose to life**, which we have adopted here, comp. chap. xiii. 14 and John v. 21. The substance of the Epistle follows.

Ver. 9. The first words of the address to the church, as given in the Authorised Version, 'I know thy works,' are to be omitted both here and in ver. 13, the salutation to the church at Pergamos. They are found in all the other Epistles, and we may be assured, therefore, that their omission in these two places is designed. We shall venture to offer what seems the most probable explanation in the general remarks on the Epistles as a whole at the close of chap. iii. Three features of the condition of the church at Smyrna are noticed:—(1) **I know thy tribulation.** The word 'tribulation' is to be understood in the general sense of affliction, suffering, but with a special reference to persecution brought upon believers for stedfastness in their Master's cause (comp. John xvi. 33); (2) **And thy poverty (but thou art rich).** Like all the churches of that early time, the church at Smyrna was composed of members for the most part poor. 'Not many rich, not many noble, were called.' But in the possession of a better inheritance it was 'rich,'—'rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which the Lord promised to them that love Him' (Jas. ii. 5); (3) **And the blasphemy of them which say that they themselves are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.** The 'blasphemy' referred to probably includes not simply reviling against Christians, but against their Lord. Then, as now, the Jews were notorious for the fierceness of their language against Christ, to whom they did not hesitate to apply every epithet of contempt and hatred (comp. 1 Cor. xii. 3; Jas. ii. 7).

The most interesting inquiry here has relation to the meaning of the word 'Jews.' Before endeavouring to answer it, it is of importance to observe that the word is not directly employed either by the Lord or by the Seer in His name. The persecutors and blasphemers referred to used it of themselves. *They* said that they were Jews. But none would so use the term except such as really were Jews alike by birth and by religion; while, in so using it, they intended to assert that they were the true people of God, and that Christians had no title to the place which they were endeavouring to claim as His. It is now denied by the Author of the Epistle that the term had any proper application to them. Had they been truly Jews, Jews in any proper sense of the word, they would have taken up an altogether different attitude towards Christ and Christianity from that which they actually occupied. They would have seen that in the faith of Jesus the purpose of their own Mosaic economy was fulfilled; and they would have cast in their lot with the Christian Church. They did not do so. Instead of believing in Jesus, they were everywhere the chief stirrers up of hatred and persecution against His followers (Acts xiv. 19, xvii. 5, 13, etc.). How could they be Jews? The Jews at least worshipped God, and assembled in His synagogue to study the Law and the Prophets; of these blasphemers it could only be said that they were a synagogue of Satan. It is not denied that the word 'Jews' is thus used here in an honourable sense; and, accordingly, it has often been urged that we have in this a proof that the Author of the Apocalypse cannot have been also the Author of the fourth Gospel, inasmuch as in the latter those named 'the Jews' are the embodiment of everything that is most hard and stubborn and devilish. Two answers may be given to the charge:—(1) St. John does not *originate* the word, he only *quotes* it; and (2) the expression is not the same as that used in the Gospel,—there 'the Jews,' here 'Jews.'

It may be noticed in passing, that when we compare the use of the word 'synagogue' in the verse before us with its use in Jas. ii. 2, where it is applied to the Christian congregation, it seems not unnatural to think that we are dealing with a point of time much later than that at which St. James is writing. That mixing of Jews and Christians in the same congregation, which had marked the dawn of the Church's history, had come to an end. A complete separation had taken place between the adherents of the old and the new faith. Christians were a 'church,' the Jews alone met in 'synagogue.'

Ver. 10. An exhortation not to fear the things which it was **about to suffer.** Fresh persecution was immediately to arise. The children of God are not comforted amidst their troubles by the assurance that these are about to pass away. It may often happen, on the contrary, that one wave of tribulation shall only be followed by another. Strength and comfort are to be found in other thoughts. The tribulation to be expected is then further specified. It shall proceed from **the devil,** a name of Satan chosen with a reference to the calumnies and slanders previously alluded to. Under that name he is 'the accuser of the brethren' (Rev. xii. 10; comp. Job i. ii.; Zech. iii. 1, 2). But the devil is not only to slander them. He **is about,** it is said, **to cast some of you into prison,** prevailing upon the heathen powers, ever ready to listen to accusations against the Christians, to visit them with this punishment. Further, he is to do this in order **that ye may be tried.** It is not that they may be 'proved.' God proves His people. Satan tries them; and this trial shall come from his hands, to be the means, if possible, of effecting his Satanic purposes. Their tribulation, they are told, shall be one of **ten days**

(comp. Dan. i. 12). By these words we are neither to understand ten literal days, nor ten years, nor ten separate persecutions stretching over an indefinite period of time. Like all the other numbers in the Apocalypse, the number is symbolical. It denotes completeness, yet not the Divine fulness of the number seven. They are to have tribulation frequent, oft repeated, lasting, it may be, as long as life itself, yet after all extending only to this present scene, the course of which may be best marked by 'days' that are 'few and evil' (Gen. xlvii. 9; Job viii. 9; Ps. xc. 12; comp. 1 Pet. i. 6).—**Be thou faithful unto death,** that is, not merely during the whole of life, but even to the extremity, if necessary, of meeting death.—**And I will give thee the crown of life,** that is, the crown which consists in 'life' (comp. 2 Tim. iv. 8),—in life corresponding to the life of Him of whom we have been told in ver. 8 that He 'rose to life.' This last consideration ought alone to be sufficient to determine whether we have here the crown of a king or that of a victor in the games. It is not the latter, but the former (comp. chaps. iv. 4, v. 10), the crown of the Lord Himself (chap. xiv. 14; comp. Ps. xxi. 3, 4). The use of the word *stephanos*, not *diadema*, seems to flow from the fact that the crown spoken of is not the mere emblem of royalty, but of royalty reached through severe contests and glorious victories,—its garland crown.

'So should desert in arms be crowned.'

In addition to this, however, we may well include the thought of the Hebrew crown of joy, the crown with which Solomon was crowned 'in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart' (Cant. iii. 11). Yet there, too, we must remember there is the thought that Solomon had won his bride.

Ver. 11. For the first clause of this verse, comp. what has been said on ver. 7.—**He that overcometh shall in no wise be hurt of the second death.** For the 'second death,' comp. chaps. xx. 6, 14, xxi. 8, the only other passages where the expression occurs. It is in obvious contrast with the 'life' of vers. 8 and 10. The expression is taken from the Jewish theology, and denotes the death that follows judgment.

The distinguishing feature of the Epistle to Smyrna seems to be the *rise* of persecution against the followers of Jesus, and their faithfulness in meeting it; while in the next Epistle, that to Pergamos, we shall see persecution in all its fury culminating. If so, we have the very progress once indicated by our Lord Himself in His last discourse to His disciples, 'Every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit' (John xv. 2). The lessons taught to the church at Symrna may well have been present to the soul of Polycarp, Bishop of that see, in his hour of agony, and may have powerfully contributed to sustain that glorious martyr, who was so eminently 'faithful unto death.'

CHAPTER II. 12-17.

3. *The Epistle to Pergamos.*

12 AND to[1] the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These
things saith he which hath the sharp[2] [a]sword with two [a] Ch. i. 16.
13 edges;[3] I know thy works, and[4] where thou dwellest, *even*
where Satan's [b]seat[5] *is:* and thou holdest fast my name, and [b] Ps. xciv. 20
hast not denied[6] my faith, even in those[7] days wherein Antipas
was my faithful martyr, who was slain[8] among you, where
14 Satan dwelleth. But[9] I have a few things against thee,
because thou hast there them[10] that hold[11] the doctrine[12] of
[c]Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before [c] Num. xxxi. 16.
the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to
15 commit fornication. So hast thou also[13] them[10] that hold[11] the
16 doctrine[12] of the Nicolaitanes,[14] which thing I hate.[15] Repent;[16]
or else I will[17] come unto thee quickly, and will fight[18] against
17 them with the [d]sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let [d] Num. xxii. 23, xxxi. 8.
him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that

[1] unto [2] *omit* sharp [3] sword, two-edged, sharp
[4] *omit* thy works, and [5] throne [6] didst not deny [7] the
[8] killed [9] Nevertheless [10] some [11] *add* fast [12] teaching
[13] thou also hast [14] *add* in like manner [15] *omit* which thing I hate
[16] *add* therefore [17] *omit* will [18] and I will make war

overcometh [19] will I give to eat [20] of the hidden manna, and [21] will give him a white stone, and in [22] the stone a new name written, which no man [23] knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

[19] *add* to him [20] *omit* to eat [21] *add* I [22] upon [23] one

Ver. 12. The third church addressed is that of Pergamos, now generally written Pergamum, a city which, in every thing except commerce, rivalled the most celebrated cities of Asia at the time. Without in any degree attempting to trace its history, which in no way concerns us here, it may simply be remarked that in the apostolic age Pergamos was especially noted for its worship of Æsculapius the god of medicine. With the genuine pursuit of medicine, however, there was then mixed up a great variety of other inquiries, which, dealing with the secret springs of life, and with drugs, philters, and potions, whose methods of operation no one could explain, invested the healing art with an air of impenetrable mystery. Licentiousness and wickedness of every kind were the inevitable result. Add to all this the temptations of wealth, learning, and art, together with an apparently indiscriminate worship of many deities, and we need not be surprised that Satan had at Pergamos an almost peculiar seat, and that what the Old Testament condemns under the name of witchcraft—or attempts to traffic with any spirit, however evil, in order to obtain knowledge or gratify desire—was more than ordinarily prevalent among the inhabitants of the city.

Again, as before, we meet first of all a description of Him from whom the Epistle comes. It is taken from chap. i. 16. Two only of the three characteristics there mentioned of the sword are here referred to, but it will be observed that the third meets us in ver. 16,—an illustration of that style of the Apocalypse which leads it to scatter its details of the same object in different parts of the book, so that we have often to bring them together from great distances before we learn to know the object as a whole.

Ver. 13. As in the Epistle to Smyrna, the words 'thy works' do not belong to the true text. Three particulars in the state of the church are noted;—(1) Its outward position. It dwelt where **Satan's throne is.** The word used is not 'seat,' but distinctly and intentionally 'throne' (comp. Ps. xciv. 20), the purpose of the writer being to contrast the throne of Satan with the throne of God, of which it is the evil and mocking counterpart, and thus to point with peculiar emphasis to the temptations and dangers which the Christians of Pergamos had to encounter. Very different opinions have been entertained with regard to the reasons which may have determined the Lord of the Church to describe Pergamos by this language. Some have traced it to the circumstance that the chief worship of the place was that of Æsculapius, and that the symbol of that divinity was a serpent. The explanation is fanciful. Others have attributed it to the idea that Pergamos was more given over to idolatry than other cities. There is no proof that such was the case. Others, again, have sought an explanation in the fact that Pergamos was under the Roman power, and that thus, representing the heathen persecutors of the Church, it might be said with more than ordinary force to hold the throne of Satan. This explanation also fails, for Satan is in the Apocalypse distinguished from the world-power. The true explanation seems to be that of one of the oldest commentators on the Apocalypse, that in Pergamos persecution first culminated, reaching even to the shedding of Christian blood. In ver. 10 Satan had persecuted to the point of imprisonment; here he kills; and the repetition of the closing words of the verse, **where Satan dwelleth,** in immediate connection with the putting of Antipas to death, is obviously designed to associate the thought of Satan's dwelling-place with the thought of this last extremity of his rage. In a city, where science itself was the very pillar of witchcraft and idolatry, Satan had been enabled to put forth against the bodies of the Christians every evil which envy at their souls' escape from him suggested. He had been permitted even to *reign* over their bodily life; for, whereas he had once been commanded to spare the life of Job, he had now succeeded in putting Antipas to death. Even in such a city, however, the church had been found faithful, for it is said to it, (2) **Thou holdest fast My name.** The word 'name' is used here, as elsewhere in the writings of St. John, for the fulness of that revelation of the Father which is given in the Son; and the use of the verb 'hold fast' instead of the simple 'have,' may be determined, as in chap. iii. 11, by the peculiar difficulties of the situation in which the church was placed. At the same time, it is the answer of faith to the 'holding fast' predicated of Jesus in ver. 1.—(3) **And didst not deny my faith,** not the confession of Christ's faith, but faith of which Jesus was Himself the direct object and the substance. The mention of this faith is made still more emphatic by the fact that it had been maintained even in days when persecution reached to death. Who the **Antipas** spoken of was it is impossible to say, any notice of him in the martyrologies being founded on this passage. There is even a high probability, when we consider the general structure of the Apocalypse, that there was no such person. The name may be symbolical, although it is at once to be allowed that every attempt hitherto made to point out its symbolical signification has failed.

Ver. 14. The defects of the church are next alluded to. There were in Pergamos **some that held fast the teaching of Balaam.** Comp. Num. xxv., xxxi. 16. The sins next mentioned are in all probability to be literally understood. It is to be observed that these teachers of erroneous doctrine, these seducers to grievous sin, were not merely inhabitants of the city; they were members of the church. — **Thou hast** are the words employed.

Ver. 15. **So thou also hast some that hold fast the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner.** The chief point of inquiry connected with these words is, whether they introduce a second group of erroneous teachers, or whether they constitute a second description of the Balaamites already mentioned. Various considerations may be urged in favour of the latter view:—(1) Of the Nicolaitans

as a separate sect nothing is known. Some of the early fathers derived the name from Nicolas, one of the seven deacons mentioned in Acts vi. 5, and supposed that a sect, of which they knew nothing more than they found in this passage, had sprung from him. But the tradition varied; it is in itself in the highest degree improbable; and we may safely regard it as a mere conjecture intended to explain the apparent meaning of the words before us. (2) In vers. 20–24 this same sect is obviously compared to Jezebel, a mystical name, making it probable that the name used here is also mystical. (3) The position of the word 'also' in the verse is to be noticed. It is to be closely connected with 'thou,' not 'thou hast also,' etc., as if a second class of false teachers were about to be spoken of, but 'thou also hast,' etc.: the ancient church had its Balaamites, thou hast thy Nicolaitans. (4) The addition of the words 'in like manner' is important, showing, as they do, that the second class of false teachers is really identical with the first. In these circumstances, it becomes a highly probable supposition that the word Nicolaitans is a rough translation into Greek of the Hebrew term Balaamites, destroyers or conquerors of the people. Nor is there force in the objection, even if well founded, that such a derivation is not etymologically correct. The popular instinct, so strong amongst the Jews, which took delight in noting similarities of sound, did not concern itself about scientific etymology. Similarity of sound was enough. Nor does there seem cause to be perplexed by the use in the compound Greek word of a verb signifying to conquer rather than to destroy. Evil is ever in the writings of St. John the counterpart of good. Christ is constantly the Overcomer, the Conqueror; and in like manner His enemies are the would-be conquerors, the would-be overcomers of His people. We are thus led to the conclusion that these Nicolaitans are no sect distinct from the followers of Balaam. They are a mystical name for those who in the church at Pergamos imitated the example and the errors of that false prophet of the Old Testament; and we have another illustration of the manner in which St. John delights to give double pictures of one thing (comp. chaps. i. 20, ii. 14, 15).

Ver. 16. The exhortation follows. **Repent therefore**, as in ver. 5 to Ephesus, **or else I come unto thee quickly.** Comp. on ver. 5, but note that the word 'quickly' is now added, although the coming is still special, not general. We have again an illustration of that climactic style of address which appears in these Epistles when they are considered as a whole.—**And will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.** The Lord will come to war against the Nicolaitans, not against the church. Against His Church, even in her declension, He cannot war. Her threatened punishment (and is it not enough?) is, that the Lord will make war upon His enemies without her; and that, not taking part in His struggle, she shall lose her part in His victory. It is difficult to say whether in the sword spoken of there may be any allusion to the sword of the angel in Num. xxii. 23; but such an idea is not improbable.

Ver. 17. The promise contained in this verse has always occasioned much difficulty to interpreters. It consists of three parts:—(1) **To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna.** The allusion may perhaps be to the pot of manna which was laid up in the innermost sanctuary of the Tabernacle (Ex. xvi. 33), for we see from chap. xi. 19 that the imagery of the ark within which the manna was stored was familiar to St. John. Such an allusion, however, is at the best indirect, for the manna laid up in the ark was not for food, but in memory of food once enjoyed. It seems better, therefore, to place the emphasis on the thought of the manna itself, that bread from heaven by which Israel was nourished in the wilderness, and which is now replaced in the Christian Church by 'the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that any one may eat thereof, and not die' (John vi. 50). This 'living bread' is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who is now 'hidden,' but will at length be revealed to the perfect satisfaction and joy of them that wait for Him. It is no valid objection to this view that Christ *gives* the manna, for He gives Himself, and will give Himself to be the nourishment as well as the reward of His people in the world to come, when He shall be revealed to them as He is (1 John iii. 2). The contrast between not eating the meats offered to idols and eating this heavenly banquet may be noticed in passing.—(2) **And I will give him a white stone.** The tendency of the Apocalypse to group its particulars into threes seems to require the separation of this clause from the next following, and to demand that it be considered in itself, and not as simply subordinate to the 'new name.' In determining the meaning of the 'white stone,' it will be well to bear in mind that in the Apocalypse 'white' is not a mere dull white, but a glistering colour, not even necessarily white, and that we must seek for the foundation of the figure in Jewish not in Gentile customs, and in Scripture rather than in rabbinical traditions. We shall thus have to dismiss the idea that it refers to the white pebble of the ballot-box, or to any one of the three following tablets, that given to the victor in the games and having certain privileges attached to it, that which entitled the receiver to the liberal hospitality of the giver, or that which admitted the stranger to the enjoyment of the idol feast. Rejecting these, we may also reject the supposition that the white stone has no more importance than as a medium for the name written on it. Nor does it seem easy to accept the explanation, although more legitimate than any of the above, that it was the Urim which the high priest bore within the breastplate of judgment (Ex. xxviii. 30); for the stone thus referred to was probably a diamond, and we cannot easily conceive that the name here spoken of could be inscribed on such a stone.

In these circumstances, what appears by much the more likely interpretation is that which supposes that we have an allusion to the plate of gold worn on the forehead of the high priest, with the words inscribed on it, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. What seems almost conclusive upon this point is, that we learn from other passages of this book that it was upon the forehead that the peculiar mark of the child of God was borne (chaps. iii. 12, vii. 3, xiv. 1, xxii. 4; cp. also chap. ix. 4); and we have already had occasion to speak of the importance of that law of interpretation which, in the Apocalypse, leads to the bringing of different passages together for the sake of complementing and completing one

another. In adopting this view, however, it ought to be observed that we are not to think of this 'stone' either as a plate of gold or as a precious stone, supposed by the Seer to be beaten out for the sake of receiving the inscription. Except in the present passage, the word occurs only once in the New Testament, when St. Paul says, 'I gave my *vote* against them' (Acts xxvi. 10). It thus came to denote (derived, it may be, originally from the customs of heathenism) that by which a verdict of either condemnation or acquittal was pronounced, even by Jewish lips. Here, therefore, this underlying idea of acquittal is the prominent idea of the word. Those referred to receive a stone, an ordinary stone of acquittal, but glistering with heavenly brightness, and bearing upon it the motto or legend spoken of in the next clause.—(3) **And upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth saving he that receiveth it.** What name is this? Not the Lord's name, for even in chap. xix. 11–13, urged in favour of such a view, the name is given, but the new name bestowed upon the believer, and descriptive of his position, his character, and his joy as an inhabitant of the New Jerusalem. We are not to think that the word 'knoweth' is used in the sense of outward knowledge, such as that given by reading or translation. It expresses the inward knowledge referred to in John iv. 32 (see note there), the knowledge of experience the blessedness found in the service of their Lord by those who live through Him, and which the world cannot comprehend. The world may read the name of the believer, just as there seems no cause to doubt that the name here spoken of might be read, but it cannot understand its meaning. These things God reveals by His Spirit to His own (cp. 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). We are thus again led to the conclusion that the 'new name' is neither a name of God nor of Christ, nor of the believer considered as a separate individual. It is a name which speaks of the believer's glorious condition when he is united to the Son and, in Him, to the Father. Before passing from this Epistle, it may be well to notice the correspondence between the reward thus spoken of and that holding fast of the 'name' of Christ which had been mentioned in ver. 13. As, too, the tree of life was promised to the Christian of Ephesus who should overcome that temptation to false knowledge to which our first parents in Eden yielded, so, when the Christian of Pergamos is not led astray by the error of the new Balaamites, and when he refuses to partake of the offerings of the dead which he might have had from them (Ps. cvi. 28), he shall receive manna, of which, in its rich nourishment and invigorating properties, the manna of Israel was but the faintest type (John vi. 32).

CHAPTER II. 18–29.

4. *The Epistle to Thyatira.*

18 AND unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These
things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto[1]
19 a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine[2] brass; I know thy
works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy[3] patience,
and thy works;[4] and the[5] last[6] *to be*[7] more than the first.
20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee,[8] because[9]
thou sufferest that woman[10] Jezebel, which calleth herself a
prophetess, to teach and to seduce[11] my servants to commit
21 fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave
her space to[12] repent of her fornication;[13] and she [a] repented [a] Rom. ii. 4.
22 not.[14] Behold, I will[15] cast her into a bed, and them that
[b] commit adultery with her into great[16] tribulation, except they [b] 2 Kings ix. 22.
23 repent of their deeds.[17] And I will [c] kill her children with [c] 2 Kings x. 11
death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which
searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every[18] one

[1] eyes as [2] white [3] and thy love, and faith, and ministry, and
[4] *omit* and thy works [5] thy [6] *add* works [7] are
[8] Nevertheless I have against thee [9] that [10] thy wife
[11] and she teacheth and seduceth [12] time that she should
[13] *omit* of her fornication [14] willeth not to repent of her fornication
[15] do [16] a great [17] out of her works [18] each

24 of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and
unto [19] the rest [20] in Thyatira, as many as have not this
doctrine,[21] and which have not known the depths of Satan, as
25 they speak;[22] I will put [23] upon you none other burden. But
26 that [24] which [25] ye have *already* [26] hold fast till I come.[27] And
he that overcometh, and [28] keepeth my works unto the end, to
27 him will I give [d] power [29] over the nations: and [30] he shall [d] Lu. xix. 17
[e] rule [31] them with a rod [32] of iron; as the [33] vessels of a [34] potter [e] Ps. ii. 8, 9. cxlix. 7, 8.
shall [35] they be [36] broken to shivers: even [37] as I [38] received [39]
28 of my Father. And I will give him the [f] morning star. [f] Num. xxiv. 17; ch. xxii. 16.
29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto
the churches.

[19] *omit* and unto
[20] *add* that are
[21] teaching
[22] say
[23] I cast
[24] *omit* that
[25] what
[26] omit *already*
[27] until I shall have come
[28] *add* he that
[29] authority
[30] *add* as a shepherd
[31] tend
[32] sceptre
[33] *omit* the
[34] the
[35] are
[36] *omit* be
[37] *omit* even
[38] *add* also
[39] have received

Ver. 18. The fourth church addressed is that of Thyatira, a city finely situated in a rich and well-watered district of Asia Minor, at no great distance from Pergamos, but possessing none of the political importance of the latter. It is interesting to notice in connection with Acts xvi. 14, though it does not concern us at present, that Thyatira was famous for its purple or scarlet dyes. The sun-god was the leading object of worship to the heathen inhabitants of the city; and it has been thought that there is thus a peculiar propriety in the light in which Jesus presents Himself to its church, as One whose 'eyes are as a flame of fire.' For the description now given of Himself by the great Head of the Church, cp. chap. i. 14, 15. The most remarkable part of it is that in which He designates Himself **the Son of God.** It was as One 'like unto a Son of man' that He had been beheld by the Seer in chap. i. 13, although that description was in no degree intended to exclude the thought of His essential Divinity. He was really the Son of God like unto a son of man. Now, however, the Divine aspect of His person is brought prominently forward, yet not simply because in this Epistle He is to speak of executing judgment, for He both executes judgment in other Epistles, and He does so as Son of man (John v. 27; see note there), but because Divine Sonship is part of that constitution of His person upon which it becomes the Church constantly to dwell. Perhaps also the distinct phase of the Church upon which we enter in the second group of these Epistles may explain the prominence given to the thought of the 'Son of God.' She has been hitherto regarded in what she is. She is now to be looked at in her struggle with the world (see remarks at close of the seven Epistles); let her learn that 'God is on her side.'

Ver. 19. The words **I know thy works,** which had been omitted from the second and third Epistles, are resumed in the fourth, and they meet us in each of the four Epistles of the second group. The general term 'works' is next specialized into four parts, or two groups of two members each, the members of the first group corresponding to those of the second. **Love** shows itself in **Ministry**; **Faith** in **Patience** or endurance. But more than this. Thyatira's **last works are more than the first.** Not that 'ministry' and 'patience' are greater than 'love' and 'faith,' or that they alone deserve the designation 'works.' That term is as applicable to the latter as to the former. The fact commended is that there is progress *in them all.* The path of the church has been as the morning light shining unto the perfect day. She has not fallen back like Ephesus; she has advanced.

Ver. 20. What is praiseworthy in the church has been spoken of. The Lord now passes to that in which it failed. Again a division into four parts meets us:—(1) **That thou sufferest thy wife Jezebel.** We adopt this reading as every way preferable to the reading, 'that woman Jezebel,' given in both the Authorised and Revised Versions. The external evidence in its favour is at least equal to that for the common reading. The internal is much superior; and it is almost impossible to doubt that the misinterpretation which supposed the 'Angel' to be the Bishop of the church, and which therefore recoiled from the idea that the Bishop's wife could have been a person of the kind here described, formed the chief reason why it was set aside for that commonly adopted. Let us have distinctly impressed upon us that the 'Angel' of Thyatira is the church of that city, and let us remember that the peculiar aggravation of the sin of Ahab in the Old Testament was that 'he did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up' (1 Kings xxi. 25); and we shall at once feel how much more in keeping with the force and vigour of the whole Apocalypse, as well as of the present passage, is the reading 'thy wife' than the reading 'that woman.' The very head and front of the church's sin was, not that it merely tolerated false teaching and sinful practices in its midst, but that

it had allied itself with them. Many, no doubt, had remained pure (ver. 24), but the church as a whole was guilty. The Jezebel of the Old Testament, whose story lies at the bottom of the apostle's language, was a heathen both by birth and training; and Ahab's marriage with her was the first instance of the marriage with a heathen princess of a king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Thus had Thyatira sinned, had entered for the sake of worldly honour into alliance with the world, and was still continuing the sinful tie. The sentence, 'thou sufferest thy wife Jezebel,' it must be noticed, is complete in itself, 'thou toleratest,' 'thou lettest alone' (comp. John xi. 48, xii. 7; and for the story of Jezebel, 1 Kings xvi., xviii., xix., xxi.; 2 Kings ix.). Most commentators admit that the name Jezebel is to be understood symbolically; but they are not agreed whether, as so used, it refers to a single person, —a false female teacher,—or a heretical party within the church. The latter opinion is by much the more probable of the two, although we have before us not so much a regularly constituted party, as separate persons who were themselves addicted to the sins described, and who were endeavouring at the same time to seduce others. In Jer. iv. 30 we have a similar description of the degeneracy of the Church. The persons thus pointed at were, it must be further noticed, within the Church. They had drawn their erroneous views and sinful practices, it is true, from heathenism, as Jezebel was the daughter of a heathen king, but they were not themselves heathen. They were professing members of the Christian community, for this Jezebel **calleth herself a prophetess**, not a false prophetess, but one with a divine commission.—(2) **And she teacheth**, etc. The sins into which the persons alluded to sought to betray the church are now mentioned. They are the sins already spoken of in the case of Pergamos; yet there is at the same time an important distinction. At Pergamos the evil came from an outward source, Balaam; at Thyatira from an inward source, Jezebel. The former was a Gentile Prophet; the latter was the wife of the King of Israel. Mark the progress.

Ver. 21. (3) **And I gave her time that she should repent.** It is intended by the use of the word 'time' here, that we should fix our thoughts upon the delay of the Son of God in executing His righteous judgments (comp. chap. x. 6). All along punishment was deserved, but He withheld His hand that His goodness might lead the evil-doers to repentance.—(4) **She willeth not to repent of her fornication.** The delay was in vain. The hearts of these transgressors was set in them to do evil. They 'willed' not to repent. The expression is remarkable and characteristic (comp. on John v. 6, vi. 21).

Ver. 22. **Behold, I do cast her into a bed**, etc. The bed is not one of lust, but of sickness and sorrow (comp. Ps. xli. 3). —**And them that commit adultery with her.** We are not to understand that she is the adulteress with whom sin is committed, but that, as she is an adulteress, so they along with her are also adulterers and adulteresses.—**Except they repent out of her works.** The contrast of 'they' and 'her' in these words is worthy of notice, showing as it does the close identification of the followers of Jezebel with herself (comp. John ix. 4, and note there).

Ver. 23. **And I will kill her children with death.** Those thus named 'her children' are generally distinguished from the persons formerly mentioned either as her 'proper adherents,' in contrast with 'those who encouraged her,' or as the 'less forward,' 'the deceived,' in contrast with the deceivers. There seems no ground for either view. The latter destroys the force of the word 'children' (comp. John i. 12), the former that of the previous clause. The truth is that the two classes are the same: they are in both cases those who partake of her spirit, and who follow her example. It will be observed that the fate of the historical Jezebel is repeated in those who imitate her. As Ahab's queen was cast out of the window, so this Jezebel is to be cast into affliction. As Ahab's sons were slain, so the spiritual progeny of this Jezebel shall be killed.—**And all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.** 'All the churches,' an indication of the universal reference of these Epistles. And the 'churches,' not the world, shall 'know,' shall have inward knowledge and experience of the fact (comp. 'knoweth' in ver. 17). The wicked are not in the Lord's thought, 'for God's judgments are far above out of their sight, but all who ponder these things and lay them to heart' (Trench).—**And I will give unto each one of you according to your works.** The clause is peculiarly important when taken along with that immediately preceding it. The Lord tries the 'reins and hearts,' the most inward parts of men. From these the 'works' of men cannot be separated. His 'works' are the whole of man. The inward manifests itself in the outward: the value of the outward is dependent upon the inward.

Ver. 24. **But unto you I say, the rest that are in Thyatira.** The apostle turns from the church at large to that smaller section of it which had resisted the influences of the false teachers symbolized by Jezebel. They **have not this teaching**; that is, they have it not as their possession, they do not make it their own. Nor have they known **the depths of Satan.** The word 'depths' was a favourite one at the time with those who pretended to a profounder knowledge of the truth, whether of God or Satan, than could be gained through the authorised teachers of the Christian Church, and who seem not unfrequently to have associated with their religious speculations lives of shameless and unrestrained licentiousness. The prevalent idea is, that these persons spoke only of 'the depths' or of 'the depths of God,' and that in bitter irony the Lord of the Church either adds here the words 'of Satan,' or substitutes the name of Satan for the name of God. Such suppositions are perhaps unnecessary. We may have before us a trace of that Gnostic sect known as the Ophites, a name derived from the Greek word for a serpent, the emblem of Satan. That sect entertained a profound reverence for Satan, looking upon him as the benefactor, not the destroyer of man, while the ultimate result of their religious system was that they converted Satan into God and evil into good. The heresy was one of a most disastrous character; and yet in some of its forms it attained a widespread influence in the early Church, more especially in that district of Asia Minor which embraced the seven churches of the Apocalypse. No wonder that we find it alluded to as it is here! **I cast upon you none other burden.** It is

difficult to determine what precise 'burden' is thus alluded to, whether the sufferings of one kind or another which the faithful remnant of the church was enduring, or the Christian obligations under which it lay to avoid the sins and errors encouraged by the Nicolaitans. This latter view has been thought to find confirmation in the decree of Acts xv. 28, 29, where language very similar to that now before us is employed. By such an interpretation, however, the Christian life itself would be represented as a 'burden;' while, at the same time, the use of the word 'cast' is unsuitable to the thought of Christian precepts. The circumstances of the case must determine the meaning. The church at Thyatira 'suffered' Jezebel. The 'burden' of that part of it which remained true to its Lord was that this was done. Jezebel ought to have been put away: the alliance with the world ought to have been broken. The struggle to effect this, one maintained not against the world, but against brethren in a common faith, was so great that the Lord of the Church would lay upon those engaged in it 'no other burden' (comp. on chap. ii. 1).

Ver. 25. **But what ye have hold fast until I shall have come.** It is important to notice the change of expression in the original for the 'coming' spoken of. Twice already in this chapter (vers. 5, 16) have we read of a coming of the Lord, but on each of these two occasions it was closely associated with, and limited by, the words 'unto thee.' These 'comings' therefore referred not so much to the final coming as to special judgments in which it was foreshadowed: this refers rather to that in which all special judgments culminate, the Second and final Coming. Again we see another trace of the climactic nature of these Epistles.

Ver. 26. **And he that overcometh.** We come now to the promise contained in this Epistle for the faithful, and it will be observed that for the first time it is not preceded by the call to him 'that hath ears to hear.' That call in the four last Epistles of the seven is reserved for the close (comp. on ver. 7).—**And he that keepeth my works unto the end.** The construction of the original shows that this description is distinct from the preceding. Attention ought to be directed to the expression 'My works,' commentators appearing to miss their force. They are not simply the works which Jesus commands, but those which He does,—a fresh illustration of that close identification of Jesus with His people which marks the writings of St. John. We meet the opposite identification, that of Jezebel and her followers, in ver. 22.—**To him will I give authority over the nations.** By the 'nations' we are not to understand the nations as such, but the nations as opposed to the true Israel of God, and as alienated from God,—properly the Gentiles. The allusion is to Ps. ii. 8, 9; and the believer shall not merely have power, but rightful power, authority, over them.

Ver. 27. **And as a shepherd he shall tend them with a sceptre of iron.** The figure has nothing to do, as so often supposed, with the Homeric title, 'Shepherd of the people.' Jesus as King is Shepherd of His own; but He is also Shepherd of His enemies, though in a different way. Hence the 'iron sceptre,' for the instrument alluded to is not a rod or shepherd's crook, but a king's sceptre (comp. chaps. xii. 5, xix. 15). The fact that it is of iron brings out the judgment involved.—**As vessels of the potter are they broken to shivers,** words which cannot be interpreted as expressing 'a judgment behind which purposes of grace are concealed,' 'a threat of love.' Whether grace may one day be revealed even for those upon whom the judgments spoken of descend, we are not told. Actual facts proved that behind the words, 'in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,' such purposes of grace lay: but they were not contained in the words; nor are they here.—**As I received of my Father.** Again we have the privileges of Christ's people closely identified with those which He Himself enjoys. He receives of the Father, and what He receives He makes theirs.

It must be noticed that, like all the promises of these Epistles, this promise belongs to the future, not to the present life. The reader, too, will not fail to mark the correspondence between it and the description of the Lord in ver. 18, as well as that between it and the particular trials of this church. A heathen element in Thyatira was threatening to destroy the life of God's people there. They have given them the assurance of the coming of a time when that element shall be crushed beneath their feet.

Ver. 28. **And I will give him the morning star.** Very various opinions have been entertained with regard to the meaning of this 'star.' It has been supposed to be the devil, or the king of Babylon, or the glorified body, or the heavenly glory, or the earnest of the sovereignty of light over darkness. We must gather the meaning from the Apocalypse itself; and from chap. xxii. 16 we shall be led to the belief that the morning star is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is 'the bright and morning star,' and He gives Himself to His people, that in Him they may find their victory and joy. There is a peculiar propriety in the mention of this reward for the Church at the moment when she is thought of as set on high over all her enemies. When she is secretly nourished in the Tabernacle of God she is a candlestick: when she has met and conquered the world she is a star,—the Lord Himself being in the first instance both the one and the other. With this idea of the morning star no thought of bringing in those who have rejected Jesus ought to be combined. Whether or not they shall be brought in lies in the secret purposes of God unrevealed to us (comp. on ver. 27).

Ver. 29. Comp. on ver. 7.

In the church at Thyatira we seem to pass for the first time to the Church considered in her widest aspect and as brought into positive relations with the *powers* of the heathen world. These powers have penetrated within her, and she has in part yielded to their influence. God's people have allied themselves with a heathen princess, and she has tempted them to sin. The first Epistle of the second group thus corresponds to the first of the first group, although with a difference in harmony with the general nature of the two groups as wholes. In the first Epistle of the first group the evil is wholly from within; the church has forsaken her first love. In the first Epistle of the second group the evil enters from without; the world tempts, and the church yields, at least in part, to the temptation in order that she may have a share in the world's glory. In the one case she has forgotten Him who walketh in the midst of the

seven golden candlesticks, and whose love never fails: in the other the power of the present and the seen has led too many of her members to break their covenant with Him who is the Son of God, whose kingdom is not of this world, and whose rewards are future and unseen.

CHAPTER III. 1–6.

5. *The Epistle to Sardis.*

1 AND unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the [a] seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that
2 thou livest, and [1] art dead. [b] Be [2] watchful, and strengthen [3] the things which [4] remain, that are [5] ready to die: for I have
3 not [6] found thy works perfect [7] before [8] God. Remember therefore how [9] thou hast received and [c] heard,[10] and hold fast,[11] and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee [12] as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come
4 upon thee. Thou [13] hast a few names even [14] in Sardis which have not defiled [15] their garments; and they shall walk [16] with
5 me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same [17] shall [18] be clothed in white raiment;[19] and I will not [20] blot out his name out of the book of life, but [21] I will [d] confess
6 his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

[a] Ch. i. 4, 16.
[b] Eph. v. 14.
[c] Mat. xiii. 20; 1 Thes. i. 9, 10.
[d] Mat. x. 32, 33.

[1] *add* thou [2] Become [3] stablish [4] that [5] which were
[6] *omit* not [7] no works of thine fulfilled [8] *add* my
[9] after what manner [10] didst hear [11] keep [12] *omit* on thee
[13] But thou [14] *omit* even [15] did not defile [16] *add* along
[17] *omit* the same [18] *add* thus [19] garments [20] in no wise [21] and

The fifth church addressed is that of Sardis, one of the most famous of the seven cities to which these Epistles are sent, the capital in former days of the great kingdom of Lydia, Crœsus' kingdom, largely engaged in commercial enterprises, and distinguished for a magnificent temple of the goddess Cybele, the rites of whose worship were in a high degree impure. A few uninhabited ruins now remain.

Ver. 1. First, as in each previous case, we have a description of Him from whom the message comes, **He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars** (cp. i. 4, 16). The description is different from that of chap ii. 1, where the Lord is described as 'holding fast the seven stars in His right hand.' There He holds them fast for their protection: here they are simply spoken of as His possession. He is their Lord, and they ought to worship Him. The fact that He has also the 'seven Spirits of God,' or in other words, the Holy Spirit in His fulness, is on the one hand a proof of the doctrine of the Western Church on the relation of the Holy Spirit to our Lord, while on the other hand it also points to the true and spiritual nature of the service which He requires. They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. This last is precisely what the church at Sardis failed to do. To the world she seemed a star, but He who, as having the Spirit without measure, has the stars also, knew that she was not what she seemed to be.—**That thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead.** These words denote more than that Sardis was dead while she lived. She had a name, a prominent, famous name, a name of which the whole connection shows us that she boasted. The thought of this name was her ruin: 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' More than this; let a prosperous church, a church commanding the high places of the earth, a church no more persecuted, but at ease in the enjoyment of her privileges, the admiration of multitudes, an object of attention to the world,—let such a church remember that the outward is not the inward, and that power and splendour of position have no value in the sight of Heaven compared with spirituality of heart and life.

Ver. 2. **Become watchful.** Sardis had failed to 'watch,'—the very sin into which spiritual pride is sure to fall. Therefore must she first o. all awake, discover what her temptation is, and put herself on her guard against the foe.—**And stablish the things that remain which were ready to die**; that is, which were ready, at the moment when the searching eye of her Lord was first directed towards her, to sink into the state characterized as 'dead.' Christian graces, not persons, are alluded to,—a part of the church's 'works' that had as yet been preserved from the too complete degeneracy by which she had been overtaken.—**For I have found no works of thine fulfilled before my God.** In no part of the Christian life had Sardis reached that perfect spirituality after which she was to aspire. Spirituality is Christ's perfection, His consummation in His state of glory. At the right hand of the Father He is 'spirit,' not to the exclusion of a body, but with a 'spiritual body,' a body completely accordant and harmonious with that state of spirit in which He is. But the Church is Christ's fulness; and so long, therefore, as she is not spiritual, her works are not 'fulfilled.' It is difficult to say why we should have the word 'my' prefixed to God; but the probability is that it is for the purpose of bringing out that true nature of God which leads Him to demand spiritual worship. 'My God,'—'the God for whom and in whom I live, who am your ascended and glorified High Priest and King.' The Pharisee might think that God would be satisfied with outward profession: the heathen might offer Him a merely formal service. Jesus knew that He was 'spirit' (John iv. 24), and that only in spirit could He be worshipped.

Ver. 3. The exhortation to Sardis is to remember, not the simple fact that she had received, but how she had done so, **after what manner thou hast received**, the earnestness, the faithfulness, and the zeal which had marked the first stages of her spiritual life. The change of tense in the next clause is interesting.—**Didst hear.** She had 'received,' and she still retained possession of the truth; hence the perfect. But she no longer 'heard' in that sense of obeying so common in the writings of St. John; hence the aorist pointing to a specific moment of the past. There is always a reason, whether we can discover it or not, for such changes of tense (cp. on vii. 14).—If, however, the church at Sardis will not obey the command to 'watch,' she shall not escape. The Lord will **come as a thief.** It is not the suddenness or unexpectedness of the hour only that is thought of under the image of a 'thief,' for that image has rather its expression in the last clause of the verse. It is the object with which the thief comes that is in view,—to break up and to destroy. Thus the Lord 'comes as a thief;' and the hour shall not be known till He is come (comp. Luke xii. 39; 1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 10).

Ver. 4. Sardis was not wholly given over to evil, and the Lord does not less mark and approve the good than condemn the evil that was in her.—**But thou hast a few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments.** It is impossible to miss the play upon the word 'names' as compared with 'thou hast a name' in ver. 1. A few had resisted the temptations to licentiousness so prevalent around them, and had maintained their Christian life and character in a manner corresponding to the pure and lofty aims of the faith which they professed.—Hence the promise, again leading us back to the grace to which it is attached: **they shall walk along with me in white.** The grace which clothed them even here as a white robe shall become a robe of glory. Their glory shall be the very glory of their Lord, for there is force in the preposition 'along with;' they shall be sharers in what the glorified Redeemer is.—**For they are worthy** (comp. for contrast, chap. xvi. 5, 6).

Ver. 5. **He that overcometh shall thus be clothed in white garments.** He shall be clothed about, shall be wrapped round and round with the glistering glory of ver. 4.—**And I will in no wise blot out his name out of the book of life.** The 'book of life' is a book conceived of as a register, containing the names of the true citizens of Zion (cp. Ex. xxxii. 32; Dan. xii. 1; Luke x. 20; Rev. xiii. 8, xvii. 8, xx. 12, xxi. 27, xxii. 19). There is no statement here that there is such a process of erasure of names from the book of life as may warrant us in saying that names once admitted to that book are being continually blotted out. Nor is such a thought in harmony with the general teaching of the Apocalypse, which looks rather at the number of the saved and of the lost as being from the first complete. What we are told is, not that some names shall be blotted out, but that certain names shall in no wise be so.—**And I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels** (cp. Matt. x. 32, 33). He who has sought no *name* before men (comp. ver. 1) shall have his 'name' confessed by his Lord in the great day.

Ver. 6. The usual call, with which the four last Epistles close.

CHAPTER III. 7-13.

6. *The Epistle to Philadelphia.*

7 AND to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;
These things saith he that is holy, [a] he that is true, he [a] Ch. i. 13, 18
that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man [1]
8 shutteth; [2] and shutteth, and no man [1] openeth; I know thy

[1] one [2] shall shut

works: behold,[3] I have set[4] before thee an open[5] door, and no
man[1] can shut it:[6] for[7] thou hast a little strength,[8] and hast
9 kept[9] my word, and hast not denied[10] my name. Behold, I
will[11] make[12] them[13] of the synagogue of Satan, which[14] say
they[15] are Jews, and[16] are not, but do lie; behold, I will make
them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I
10 have loved thee. Because thou hast kept[17] the word of my
patience, I also will [b] keep thee from[18] the hour of temptation,[19] [b] Jo. xvii 12.
which shall come[20] upon all the world,[21] to try them that dwell
11 upon the earth. Behold,[22] I come quickly: hold that fast
12 which thou hast, that no man[23] take thy crown. Him[24] that
overcometh will[25] I make a [c] pillar in the temple of my God, [c] 2 Chron. iii. 17.
and he shall[26] go no more out:[27] and I will write upon him the
name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which*
is[28] new[29] Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from
13 my God: and *I will write upon him*[30] my new name. He
that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the
churches.

[3] (behold, [4] given [5] opened [6] it)
[7] that [8] power [9] didst keep [10] didst not deny
[11] *omit* will [12] give [13] *omit* them [14] of them which
[15] that they themselves [16] *add* they [17] didst keep
[18] out of [19] the trial [20] the hour which is about to come
[21] the whole inhabited world [22] *omit* Behold, [23] one [24] He
[25] him will [26] *add* in no wise [27] come forth any more
[28] omit *which is* [29] the new [30] omit *I will write upon him*

Ver. 7. The sixth church addressed is that of Philadelphia, a city of Asia Minor, of which it is unnecessary to say more than that it possessed considerable importance, without attaining to the rank of the other cities mentioned in these chapters.

To this church the Lord is introduced in terms corresponding to those of chap. i. 13, 18. The first two parts of the description are founded on the words 'Son of man' in ver. 13, the third on the statement of ver. 18, that He who is thus spoken of has the 'keys of death and of Hades.' By the word **holy** we are to understand not so much one who is free from sin, as one who is consecrated and set apart to the service of God (see on John xvii. 17); and by the word **true**, one who is the essence of reality as opposed to one who is only phenomenal and shadowy (see on John i. 9). Both appellations are illustrated by a prophecy of Isaiah that is evidently in the writer's eye, in which the rejection of the false Shebna and the calling of the faithful Eliakim are foretold (Isa. xxii. 20–25). The Jews are represented by the one, and they are now deposed from their priestly and prophetic office. The Christ is represented by the other, and He as God's 'holy' and 'true' Priest with His people in Him is come to be the Head of that Israel of God, which is to be the 'salt of the earth,' and the 'light of the world.' As God's 'consecrated' and 'true' one, Christ is the Archetype to which all things point, whether in nature or providence or grace. Everything is 'fulfilled' in Him.—Further, He is **he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no one shall shut, and shutteth and no one openeth.** For the signification of 'key,' comp. on chap. i. 18. It is neither the key of knowledge,—of opening up the meaning of Scripture,—nor the key of discipline,—of receiving into or excluding from the Church. It is rather the key of power, of that power by which the Lord of glory is Ruler in His own house,—the kingdom of God. He is the Way, no one cometh unto the Father but by Him; and against those that come to Him the gates of Hell shall not prevail (comp. Isa. xxii. 22). There is thus a much closer connection between this latter part of the description and the two earlier parts than we might at first suppose; for it is as the divinely-commissioned servant of the Most High, absolutely perfect, absolutely 'true,' comprehending in Himself the essence of all reality, of all enduring and eternal life, that the Son of man is the 'Captain' of our salvation, the Prince of life who opens and closes the kingdom of heaven on conditions involved in the nature of things, and therefore irreversible by any power in heaven or earth or hell.

Ver. 8. The contents of the Epistle begin in the usual manner, and then proceed, the first sentence being parenthetical, **Behold, I have given before thee an open door, and no one can shut it.** The translation of the original thus offered cannot be said to be idiomatic; but, when the inspired author has employed unidiomatic Greek for the

purpose of giving expression to a particular thought which appeared to him important, it seems to be the duty of a translator to follow his example, and to endeavour as best he may to find utterance for the same thought in his own language. This is the case here. There can be no doubt that the verb 'to give' is a very important one in the writings of St. John, and not least so in these seven Epistles, in every one of which it has a place. In the words before us it is not used through any imperfect knowledge of the Greek tongue. It is deliberately chosen to bring out the fact that every advantage we possess, every privilege we enjoy, every victory we gain, is the gift of Him in whom we live. The Lord does not merely do certain things for His people: in the doing of them He bestows His 'gifts.' Nay, not only so, His giving is part of a chain that binds together the lowest and the highest in His kingdom. The Father gives the Son; the Son gives Himself: in giving Himself, the Son gives us all things: whatever we receive is part of one line of giving.—There is difficulty in determining the meaning of the 'opened door.' We may at once set aside the idea that it is a door of access to the understanding of Scripture. Is it then, as generally viewed, a door of opportunity for carrying on the mission work of the Church,—mission work which is then thought by some to have reference to the Gentiles, by others to the Jews? This idea is no doubt taken from such texts as 1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12; Col. iv. 3; but the supposed analogy loses its force when we observe that no instance of it can be quoted from the writings of St. John. On the other hand, there can be no hesitation as to the meaning of the word 'door' in chap. iv. 1, or in John x. 7, 9. In these passages the 'door' is something that leads the persons before whom it is opened into the happiness referred to in the context. Still further, it is unfavourable to the idea of missionary work here—(1) That the thought of converting the world by the instrumentality of the Church is foreign to the Apocalypse; (2) That missionary results achieved in this world cannot be described in the language of ver. 9. Jews and heathens, when converted, neither worship before the Church nor pay such homage to her as is there implied; they worship before Christ; He is the object of their homage; (3) That the Church is conceived of here in her royal as well as in her priestly capacity. This appears from mention of the 'crown' in ver. 11, and from the fact that the verb translated 'worship' suggests the thought of homage to royalty; (4) Add what is said on the clause 'and he shall in no wise go any more out' in ver. 12; (5) Lastly, notice the peculiar construction of the sentence, where the thrice, or rather the twice repeated 'behold' (for the third behold is merely the taking up again of the second, as 'knowing' in John xiii. 3 is the taking up again of the same word in ver. 1) leads to the inference that ver. 9 is simply a second picture, or fuller explanation of ver. 8. But ver. 9 certainly does not express any conversion of the Jews: and neither, therefore, is ver. 8 the expression of means taken for the conversion of either them or the Gentiles.

The 'opened door,' then, is no other than that by which the faithful enter into the enjoyment of the heavenly glory, as well as that by which those spoken of in ver. 9 enter, so far at least as to see them, in order to pay them homage while they sit upon their throne.—This door no one shall shut, that is, no one shall be able to prevent believers from entering on their reward. Their enemies may frown upon them, persecute them as they persecuted their Lord, but it will be in vain. The world shall be compelled to own them as it was compelled to own Him in part even here, and fully, however much to its shame, hereafter (comp. chap. i. 7).—The following words present in three particulars the 'works' referred to in the first clause of the verse.—(1) **Thou hast a little power.** The church at Philadelphia had not altogether failed.—(2) **Didst keep my word,** that is, my word for utterance (comp. John xvii. 6, 8). She had preserved the Word of the Lord as a precious heritage.—(3) **Didst not deny my name.** She had stood firm when tempted to deny her Lord, openly confessing Him.

Ver. 9. The two parts of this verse each beginning with 'Behold' must be taken together, for the second 'behold' is the repetition of the first. Those referred to are described as in chap. ii. 9 (see note there). Commentators generally imagine that we have here a promise of the conversion of the Jews literally understood, not indeed of the whole nation, but of that 'remnant' which, as we learn from other passages of Scripture, still remained, amidst the general obstinacy of the nation, susceptible to the influences of the Christian faith. It is impossible to take such a view, for not only do the prophecies upon which the language before us rests, if it be a prophecy (Isa. ii. 3, xlix. 21–23, lx. 14–16; Zech. viii. 20–23), refer to the coming in of the Gentiles rather than of the Jews; but there is nothing in the words in the least degree resembling a promise of conversion. They speak only of constrained submission to a Church which has been hitherto disowned, and of acknowledging what has been hitherto denied,—that Christians are the object of God's love (comp. John xiv. 31). It ought further to be observed, that in the language employed by the Lord it is not *some* of these Jews that are thought of, but *all*. There is no mention of the 'remnant' alluded to by St. Paul in Rom. ix. 27. We are therefore entitled to conclude that in this verse nothing is said of a calling in of the Jews, whether in whole or in part. What we read of is simply the bowing down of the Church's enemies before her feet. The outward *progress* of the Church, as illustrated by the case of Philadelphia, is again worthy of notice. At chap. ii. 9 these enemies of the faith were only not to be feared: now they bow in submission before her whom they had persecuted. Nor is the inward *progress* of the Church less perceptible. For the first time in these Epistles we see her bearing witness to Christ in word, opening her lips to speak the Word of God, herself, in short, a continuation of The Word.

Ver. 10. **Because thou didst keep the word of my patience.** The reference is neither to any precepts of Christ concerning patience, nor to any accounts given us of the patience of Christ Himself, but simply to Christ's 'word,' which cannot be kept without much patient endurance on the part of His people.—**I also will keep thee out of the hour of the trial,** etc. The hour spoken of is described as that of 'the trial,' the great, probably the final, trial which was now about to come, which was near at hand. 'Out of' (comp.

John xvii. 15) this trial believers are to be kept,—not that they are to be kept in it, when in the course of providence it comes upon the Church as well as others, but that they are to be kept entirely out of it; it shall not touch them. This trial, then, is not to be a trial of the world, in order to see whether it will repent, or a trial of the Church, in order to confirm her in faith; nor is it to operate in two ways,—bringing out the fidelity of the believing, and hardening the unbelieving. It really befalls the impenitent alone, and is the just recompense of their sin (comp. Matt. xxiv. 5, etc.; 2 Thess. iii. 3). Even if the righteous suffer in it, it will not be to them a 'trial;' they are already elect, safe. That this is the true sense of the passage is confirmed by what follows. The trial comes upon **the whole inhabited world**; no part of the world shall escape it. But at the same time, it comes **to try them that dwell upon the earth**, not all living men without exception, but, as clearly shown by the use of this expression in the Apocalypse, only the wicked (comp. chaps. vi. 10, viii. 13, xi. 10, xiii. 8, 12, 14, xvii. 2, 8). The 'earth' is the opposite of 'heaven' (comp. John iii. 12), and they that 'dwell upon the earth' do not include the saints who are already seated in heavenly places (comp. chap. v. 9, xiii. 6, xix. 14).

Ver. 11. **I come quickly.** Comp. chap. ii. 25 and ver. 3, in both of which the general, rather than any special, coming of the Lord had been spoken of. He was to 'come' in the first, to 'come as a thief' in the second; now He 'comes quickly.'—**That no one take thy crown**, that is, take it away (comp. chap. vi. 4), deprive the church of it. The crown is the crown of future glory, the kingly crown (comp. on chap. ii. 10).

Ver. 12. We have now the promise to him that overcometh, which is divided into three parts, not two. (1) **Him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.** He shall not merely be a living stone in the temple, but something much more beautiful and glorious. It may be doubted if the idea of stability ought to be introduced here in connection with the word 'pillar.' That idea seems to be drawn from the words immediately following, which have been improperly associated with those before us. The thought of the pillar is rather that of ornament and beauty to the building of which it is a part. (2) **And he shall in no wise come forth any more.** These words are not to be taken in the sense of, he shall be in no danger of being thrust out or of falling away. They rather form, when rightly viewed, a remarkable illustration of the unity of thought between the Apocalypse and the fourth Gospel, as well as of that close identification of the believer with his Lord which is so prominent in each. The verb 'come forth,' as used of Jesus in the fourth Gospel, expresses not only His original derivation from the Father, but His whole manifestation of Himself as the 'sent' of God (John viii. 42, xiii. 3, xvi. 30, xviii. 1 and note there). It includes, therefore, the thought of all His suffering and sorrow, of all His humiliation and self-sacrifice until He returned to the Father. In a similar sense it seems to be used of the believer here. The Lord is now exalted in glory, and 'comes forth' no more; the believer, when crowned with his glory, shall in like manner be safe from all future trial. (3) **And I will write upon him,** etc. Three things are to be written, not upon the pillar, but upon the victorious believer—first, **the name of my God.** Considering the manner in which one part of the Apocalypse enlarges and explains another, it is hardly possible not to take this part of the promise as an enlargement of what has already met us in chap. ii. 17. We are thus led to think again of the inscription upon the forehead of the high priest. Secondly, **the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God.** The Jerusalem referred to is not the earthly but the heavenly city, the city now with God, but which is hereafter to descend (chap. xxi. 2, 10). Thirdly, **my new name**, that is, a name of Christ in His character as Redeemer. All three things mentioned refer to the blessings of the covenant. They express in one way or another the relation of the believer to God as his Father, to Christ as the Revelation of the Father, and to the privileges and joys of citizenship in the kingdom made known to us in the Father and the Son. They thus appear not substantially different from the promise of chap. ii. 17, but rather an expansion of the 'new' name there spoken of. They contain a fuller statement of its contents, and bring to view alike the Lord whom His people serve, and the spirit in which they serve Him. We may note the correspondence, too, between witnessing to the name of Christ in ver. 8, and the bestowal of the name mentioned in the promise. May it also be that there is a correspondence between the description of the Lord in ver. 7 as 'He that is holy,' and the 'name' here given to him that overcomes? If so, we shall be the more led to think of the inscription upon the forehead of the high priest as the basis of the description of ver. 12.

Ver. 13. The usual call at the close of the second group of the seven Epistles.

CHAPTER III. 14–22.

7. *The Epistle to Laodicea.*

14 AND unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans[1] write;
These things saith the [a]Amen, the faithful and true [a] Isa. lxv.
15 witness, the [b]beginning of the creation of God; I know thy [b] Col. i. 15.

[1] in Laodicea

works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert
16 cold or hot. So then [2] because thou art lukewarm, and neither
17 cold nor hot, I will [3] spue thee out of my mouth. Because
thou sayest, [c] I am rich, and increased with goods,[4] and have [c] Lu. xii. 16. xvi. 19.
need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched,[5] and
18 miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to
buy of me gold tried in the fire,[6] that thou mayest be rich;
and white raiment,[7] that thou mayest be clothed,[8] and *that* the
shame of thy nakedness do not appear;[9] and[10] anoint thine
19 eyes with eye-salve,[11] that thou mayest see. [d] As many as I [d] Jo. xv. 2.
love, I rebuke[12] and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
20 Behold, [e] I stand at the door, and knock: if any man[13] hear [e] Jas. v. 9.
my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will
21 [f] sup with him, and he with me. To him that[14] overcometh [f] Mat. viii. 11
will[15] I grant to sit[16] with[17] me in my throne, even[18] as I also
overcame, and am set[19] down with[20] my Father in his throne.
22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto
the churches.

[2] *omit* then
[3] I am about to
[4] and have gotten riches
[5] the wretched one
[6] refined out of fire
[7] garments
[8] clothe thyself
[9] may not be manifested
[10] *add* eye-salve to
[11] *omit* with eye-salve
[12] convict
[13] one
[14] He that
[15] to him will
[16] *add* down
[17] along with
[18] *omit* even
[19] and sat
[20] along with

Ver. 14. The seventh church addressed is that of Laodicea, an important and wealthy city not very far from Philadelphia. The chief interest of Laodicea, apart from that lent to it by the fact that it was one of the seven cities addressed in the Apocalypse, arises from its connection with the history of St. Paul. That apostle had not indeed founded the church there, nor at the time at least when he wrote the Epistle to the Colossians had he visited the city (Col. ii. 1), but he cherished a lively affection for its Christian inhabitants, and anxiously sought to promote their welfare (Col. iv. 16). It is probable that the New Testament Epistle, known as the Epistle to the Ephesians, was primarily intended for the Gentile Christians of Laodicea and the neighbouring towns.

Again we are first met by a description of the exalted Redeemer, which cannot be said to be taken directly from any part of the description of the Son of man contained in chap. i. It seems rather to be composed of characteristics selected for their suitableness to the closing Epistle of the Seven. The Lord is **the Amen.** The appellation is no doubt taken from Isa. lxv. 16, where the words of the Authorised Version, 'the God of truth,' had adequately to represent the original. The Lord is rather there named 'Amen;' and the meaning of the name here is not that the Divine promises shall be accomplished by Him to whom it is given, but that He is Himself the fulfilment of all that God has spoken to His churches. —Again, He is **the faithful and true witness.** His work is to be a witness of God, and in that work He has been perfectly 'faithful,' absolutely 'true.'—Once more He is **the beginning of the creation of God,** not merely the first and highest of all creatures,—a view entirely out of keeping with what is said of our Lord in the Apocalypse, —but the principle, the initial force, to which the 'creation' of God owes its origin. More doubt may be entertained as to what the 'creation' here referred to is, whether the material creation in all its extent or the new creation, the Christian Church, that redeemed humanity which has its true life in Christ. The former is the view generally taken, but the third term of the description thus fails to correspond with the first two which undoubtedly apply to the work of redemption, while at the same time the subjoined words 'of God' become meaningless or perplexing. Add to this that in chap. i. 5, immediately after Jesus had been called the 'faithful Witness,' He had also been described as the 'first-begotten of the dead' (see note there), and we shall hardly be able to resist the conclusion that, if the whole creation be alluded to, it is only as redeemed, in its final condition of rest and glory, when the new Jerusalem has descended from heaven, and the enemies of the Church have been cast into the lake of fire (comp. Rom. viii. 21, 22; Jas. i. 18). The three predicates thus form an appellation peculiarly appropriate, not so much to the church at Laodicea considered alone, as to the last church addressed in these Epistles. We have already seen that the first Epistle, that to Ephesus, has a general as well as a special character. A similar remark is applicable now. Christ is the 'Amen' of the whole counsel of God: He is the 'Wit-

ness' who has faithfully and completely exhibited His truth; He is the source and spring of that new creation which is called into being according to His will.

Ver. 15. The contents of the Epistle now begin. **That thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.** The latter words throw light upon the interpretation of the former, for they show that we cannot well understand by 'cold' either the state of a heart simply untouched by the Gospel of love, and occupying thus a merely negative position, or that of one which has relapsed from former zeal for the truth into a condition of indifference. In no circumstances could either of these states be to the Lord an object of desire, for experience shows that there is none out of which it is so difficult to awaken the heart to a proper reception of the Divine message. There must be some positive quality in him who is thus 'cold,' for the sake of which Jesus can say, 'I would thou wert cold or hot;' and this being so, it seems only possible to think of 'coldness' as real attachment to the world, and active opposition to the Church. It may indeed be objected that such a character is wanting in that Christian element which we must suppose to exist in what is 'cold' before it could be spoken of in the language of this verse; but there is nothing to compel us to think of such an element; and the first words of the exhortation in ver. 19, 'Be zealous,' may with perfect propriety be referred to that *natural* disposition which, although not in itself Christian, is always the ground upon which the true Christian character is reared. 'Hot,' again, can only express warm Christian zeal. The church at Laodicea was neither 'cold' nor 'hot.' It had received the truth outwardly, but no deep impression had been made upon it. Its members were not zealous for the truth, but neither were they zealous against it. It was **lukewarm**, destitute of enthusiasm for anything whether good or evil. Had it been 'hot,' it would have been all that Jesus wished. Had it been 'cold,' it would at least have possessed those elements of natural character which might be turned to a satisfactory issue. As it was, nothing could be made of it.

Ver. 16. Hence the emphatic threatening of this verse. For the figure comp. Lev. xviii. 28, xx. 22.

Ver. 17. This verse is sometimes connected with the preceding, as giving a further statement of the reason why the Lord would deal with the church at Laodicea according to His threatening. But it is more natural to connect it with ver. 18, and to regard it as containing the ground of the counsel there given. The question may be asked, whether we are to understand the words of the first half of the verse as referring to temporal or spiritual wealth. The words of ver. 18 determine in favour of the former. It was not spiritual pride that had made the church at Laodicea 'lukewarm:' the spiritually proud have too many positive elements of character to justify such a description in their case. It was worldly prosperity that had made the church indifferent to the energy and power of Divine truth. Outwardly she could still profess the Christian faith. But, to be held in reality, that faith must be accompanied by a clear and deep perception of the vanity of this world. To such a state of mind riches are a bar. The rich may no doubt enter into the kingdom of God as well as the poor, but they do so with difficulty (Mark x. 23, 24). Their wants are satisfied with 'corn and wine;' the world pays homage to them; they have 'much goods laid up for many years;' they are free from anxiety as to the future; and they will 'leave their substance to their babes.' Why should they be eager about religion? They have difficulty in being 'hot.' Yet they would not oppose religion. It is easier to conform to it. They cannot oppose it or be 'cold.' Such is the state of mind which the Lord seems here to address, and hence the powerful language of the following words, **and knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and miserable**, etc. 'Thou callest the poor wretched: *thou* art the wretched one: to thee really belong the misery and the poverty and the blindness and the nakedness for which thou pitiest or professest to pity others.'

Ver. 18. The counsel follows. **I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined out of fire**, not that gold which cannot stand the fire of the great day, but the true gold of My kingdom, purified by being burnt in the furnace of trial, **that thus thou mayest be rich; and white garments**, that thou mayest appear clothed when I come; **and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see** (comp. John ix. 6). The three things mentioned are in obvious contrast with those spoken of in ver. 17, although they are not mentioned in the same order. For 'buy' comp. Isa. lv. 1.

Ver. 19. **As many as I love I convict and chasten.** The 'I' before 'convict' is very emphatic,—'I, who though I was rich became poor, who bought true riches by suffering and death.' For the force of 'convict' comp. note on John xvi. 8.—**Be zealous therefore, and repent.** 'Be zealous' comes first, because it relates to a general change of spirit. Were specifically Christian zeal in view, repentance ought to take precedence. The tenses in the original deserve notice, the first expressing the general habit, the second the decisive act.

Ver. 20. **Behold, I stand at the door.** The figure is not intended to convey to the church the thought of the Lord's constant presence, but rather the assurance that He has taken up a new position, that He is at hand for judgment, and that He will immediately admit His people to the full enjoyment of His promised blessedness.—**And knock.** These words bring more forcibly home to us the Lord's standing at the door and the nearness of His presence. No knocking in various ways, by providence, by conscience, by the ordinances of the Church, by the work of the Spirit, is referred to. The words simply show how near Jesus is, and how ready to bless (comp. Jas. v. 9). —**If any one hear my voice**, etc. The picture is one of the heavenly reward, and both statements, **I will sup with him, and he with me**, are to be taken together. The first is not confined to the blessedness of earth, the second to the blessedness of heaven; but the two combined express the glory and joy of the future world, where the believer shall be for ever with his Lord.—Different opinions have been entertained as to the foundation of the figure, a very common supposition being that it rests upon St. John's own personal intercourse with Jesus related at John i. 39, and upon his Master's visits to him at the close of many a day's labour during His earthly ministry. Such a reference is far-fetched; and it is much more natural to think of the words of the Song of Solomon in chap. v. 2, and to behold

here the festivity and joy of the time of the Lord's marriage to His Church. Rev. xix. 9, where we read of the marriage supper of the Lamb, appears to confirm this. May we not also connect with the supper of this verse the thought of the last supper in the upper chamber at Jerusalem? We are dealing with the last of the Epistles, and the imagery may well be drawn from one of the closing acts of the Saviour's life on earth. That Supper is not a mere memorial of death: it is a spiritual feast in which the life of the believer is most intimately bound up with that of his Lord, in which the union between them is the closest of all unions, that between the Bridegroom and the bride.

Ver. 21. **He that overcometh, to him will I grant to sit down along with me in my throne,** etc. This promise is the highest of all that we have met in the seven Epistles. The throne of Jesus is the throne of God,—'I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one;' 'Father, that which Thou hast given Me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with Me' (John xvii. 23, 24). The promise is the 'apotheosis of victory,' and as such it has evidently a reference not only to the church at Laodicea, but to the whole series of the seven churches, and of the promises addressed to them.

Ver. 22. The Epistle closes with the usual call of the Spirit to the churches.

We have considered the Epistles to the seven churches separately; but, before leaving the subject, it may be well to make a few remarks upon them as a whole. That they are intended to be thus looked at is allowed by every interpreter. We have not merely before us seven letters to seven individual churches, which no inner bond connects with one another, and where there is no thought of any general result; we have a representation or picture of the Church at large. Yet the traits given us of the condition of each church are historical, the seven churches selected being preferred to others, because they appeared to the apostle to afford the best typical representation of the Church universal.

The seven Epistles, however, are not merely seven. They are clearly divided into two groups, the first of which consists of the first three, the second of the four following, Epistles. Various circumstances combine to prove this, one of which—the difference of position assigned in the different groups to the call, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches'—is at once perceptible to the English reader. Another—the omission (by later reading) of the words 'I know thy works' from the Epistles to Smyrna and Pergamos, while they occur in all the remaining Epistles—is not so obvious, nor is its force so easily determined. Yet we know of no more satisfactory explanation than that the words are omitted from the second and third Epistles, because these two are so intimately connected with the first that the expression, when used in it, was supposed to extend its influence into them. It is true that the same thing does not occur in the last four, the expression 'I know thy works' meeting us in each; but this may only show that the unity of the second group is not so profound and intimate as that of the first.

If, then, it be now asked what the difference between these two groups is, we answer that in the first we have the Church of Christ in herself, in the second the Church of Christ as she mingles with the world and learns its ways. No doubt in the first group sin and suffering are spoken of; but it must be borne in mind that it is the actual not the ideal Church with which we have to deal; and the Church had not then, nor has she even now, attained to the 'stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus.' Sin marks her, and she stands in need of suffering; but it is the characteristic of the first of the two groups, that in it sin has more the aspect of weakness, while in the second it is intensified and yielded to through contact with the world. When, accordingly, we look more closely at the first three Epistles, the leading idea of each appears to be as follows. In Ephesus the church is faithful to her commission. She has indeed lost the warmth of her first love, but she holds fast the revelation of the will of God, the 'form of sound words,' with which she had been entrusted; she has tried them which 'call themselves apostles, and they are not, and has found them false,' and she has 'not grown weary in her toil.' In Smyrna this faithfulness continues, but the idea of suffering is now brought in, and the Church is told that the time is at hand when she must meet it. Lastly, in Pergamos we have a similar faithfulness even under persecution which has begun, although at the same time there are now 'some' within her own borders who have given way to evil, so that actual affliction is required to purify her. In the three Epistles taken together we have thus set before us the main New Testament conception of the Church, the Body of believers true to Christ's cause upon the whole, but taught to expect affliction, and actually afflicted, that they may be cleansed and be made to bring forth more fruit (John xv. 1, 2).

When we turn to the churches of the second group we enter upon a different field. The Church is now in actual contact with the world, and, forgetting her high calling to be Christ's witness in and against the world, she yields to its corrupting influences. Thus in Thyatira, the first of the four, it is no longer 'some' (chap. ii. 15) in her midst who tolerate evil. The Church as a whole does so. She 'suffereth,' beareth with, Jezebel, a heathen princess, the fitting type of the world and the world's sins. She knew the world to be what it was, and yet she was content to be at peace with it. It may be worthy of notice, too, that as the first picture of the church in herself—that in the Epistle to Ephesus—showed her to be peculiarly faithful on the point of doctrine, so the first picture of the church, as she begins to yield to the world, shows us that it was in doctrinal steadfastness that she failed. In the Epistle to Sardis, the second city of the second group, there is more yielding to the world than even in Thyatira. A few indeed there have not defiled their garments, but the church as a whole reproduces the Pharisees in the days of Christ, loud in their profession and renowned for it, but with no works of a true and genuine righteousness fulfilled before God. Declension in doctrine had soon been followed by declension in practice. Amidst all such declensions, however, it must never be forgotten that the Church has her times of noble faithfulness, and such a time seems to be set before us in the Epistle to Philadelphia. That the church there has been

struggling with the world we see by the description of her vanquished enemies who come in and worship before her feet (chap. iii. 9); but she had not yielded to the world. No word of reproach is uttered against her. The Epistle to Philadelphia represents either a time when the Church as a whole maintains her allegiance to the Captain of her salvation, or that remnant within the Church (as there was a remnant even in the Jewish Church of our Lord's time) which keeps 'the word of the Lord's patience' in those seasons of conflict with the main body of the Church herself that are far more hard to bear than any conflict with the world. Lastly, in Laodicea all that is most melancholy in the history of the Church's relation to the world culminates, and the last picture that is given us of her state is at the same time the saddest (comp. Luke xviii. 8). The Church is here conformed to the world, and takes her ease amidst the wealth and the luxury which the world affords to all her votaries, and to none with so much satisfaction as to those who will purchase them at the cost of Christian consistency.

Such appears to us to be a general outline of the course of thought embodied in these seven Epistles. But it is not easy to speak with confidence regarding it. The general conception of the two groups of three and four may perhaps be accepted as correct;[1] and starting from that point, other inquirers may be more successful in determining the special characteristic of the Church which each Epistle of both groups is undoubtedly intended to express.

[1] The present writer has treated the subject more fully in a paper in the *Expositor* for July 1882.

CHAPTER IV. 1–11.

Preparatory Visions.

1 AFTER this[1] I looked,[2] and, behold, a door *was*[3] opened [a] in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it [a] Ezek. i. 1: Jo. i. 51.
were of a trumpet talking[4] with me; which said,[5] Come up
hither, and I will show thee things[6] which must be[7] [b] here- [b] Ch. i. 19.
2 after.[8] And[9] immediately[10] I was in the [c] spirit: and, behold, [c] Ch. i. 10
a throne was[11] set in heaven, and *one* sat[12] on the throne.
3 And he that sat was to look upon like a [d] jasper[13] and a [d] Ezek. i. 26, 28.
sardine[14] stone:[15] and *there was* a [e] rainbow round about the [e] Gen. ix. 13.
4 throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the
throne *were* four and twenty seats:[16] and upon the seats[16] I
saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment;[17]
5 and they had[18] on their heads crowns of gold.[19] And
out of the throne proceeded[20] [f] lightnings and thunderings[21] [f] Ex. xix. 16.
and voices:[22] and *there were* seven lamps[23] of fire burning
6 before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And
before the throne *there was*[24] a [g] sea of glass[25] like unto [g] Ch. xv. 2; Ex xxxviii. 8.
crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the
throne, *were* [h] four beasts[26] full of eyes before and behind. [h] Ezek. i. 5–10
7 And the first beast[27] *was* like a lion, and the second beast[27]
like a calf,[28] and the third beast[27] had a[29] face as[30] a man, and
8 the fourth beast[27] *was* like a flying eagle. And the four

[1] these things [2] saw [3] omit *was* [4] speaking [5] one saying
[6] the things [7] come to pass [8] *omit* hereafter [9] *omit* And
[10] After these things straightway [11] there was a throne [12] sitting
[13] *add* stone [14] sardius [15] *omit* stone [16] thrones
[17] garments [18] *omit* they had [19] golden crowns [20] there proceed
[21] voices [22] thunders [23] torches [24] omit *there was*
[25] as it were a glassy sea [26] living creatures
[27] living creature [28] bull-calf [29] its [30] *add* of

beasts[30] had[31] each of them[32] six wings about *him*;[33] and *they*[34] *were*[35] full of eyes[36] within: and they rest not[37] day and night, saying, [f] Holy, holy, holy, Lord[38] God[39] Almighty,[40] which was, and is, and[41] is to come. And when those beasts give[42] glory and honour and thanks to him that sat[43] on the throne, who[44] liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall[45] down before him that sat[43] on the throne, and worship[46] him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast[47] their crowns before the throne, saying, [h] Thou art worthy,[48] O Lord,[49] to receive[50] glory and[51] honour and[51] power: for thou hast created[52] all things, and for thy pleasure[53] they are[54] and[55] were created.

[f] Isa. vi. 1-3; Jo. xii. 41.

[h] 1 Chron. xxix. 11; Neh. ix. 5, 6.

[30] having [31] *add* severally [32] *omit* about *him* [33] *omit* and *they*
[34] are [35] *add* round about and [36] and they have no rest
[37] Lord, who art [38] God, [39] the Almighty
[40] he which was, and which is, and which [41] the living creatures shall give
[42] sitteth [43] to him that [44] shall fall [45] shall worship
[46] shall cast [47] Worthy art thou [48] our Lord and our God
[49] take the [50] *add* the [51] didst create
[52] because of thy will [53] were [54] *add* they

CONTENTS. Chaps. iv. and v. form the third section of the Apocalypse; but the struggle of the Church, which it is the main object of the book to describe, does not yet begin. These two chapters are preparatory to the struggle, presenting us with such pictures of the glory of the heavenly Guardians of the Church as may fill our minds with confidence that, whatever be her trials, she shall be conducted through them to a glorious issue. As the foundation of all that God is, has done, and will do, St. John receives in chap. iv. a vision of His absolute holiness, which is borne witness to by His Church, and by the whole of His redeemed creation. This is followed in chap. v. by another vision, from which it appears that the mystery connected with the dealings of the thrice holy One (chap. iv. 8) shall not last for ever. In Immanuel, the Incarnate Lamb of God, the mystery otherwise so oppressive shall be made manifest; and our hearts may be at peace. The visions of these two chapters have their parallel in Isa. vi., where the vision of the thrice holy God presented to the prophet (vers. 1–8) is introductory to his terrible commission at ver. 9. Isaiah is warned by his vision that the Almighty, notwithstanding the mystery of His dealings, is holy, and that the beings who see what He is doing cannot but adore Him.

Ver. 1. **After these things** denotes succession of visions, not of time; and the rest of the verse is preparatory to the vision rather than strictly speaking a part of it. The apostle must be understood to be still 'in the spirit,' for that is the state in which at chap. i. 10 he hears the voice now again referred to. Two things are introduced to us by the word **behold**:—(1) **A door opened in heaven**, not opening but open, so that there may be the freest intercourse between heaven and earth (comp. Ezek. i. 1; John i. 51); and that we, seeing into heaven, may understand what is to happen upon earth. Faith is the condition of true wisdom. (2) The voice, identified with that spoken of in chap. i. 10 by being described in the same language. It is the same mysterious voice of judgment, therefore, as that heard there. The Seer is invited to ascend to the place whence the voice issued, and is told what will be shown him. The language describing what he is to see has already met us in chap. i. 1, 19; and it points to the fortunes of the Church throughout the whole period of her history down to the time of her glorification.

Ver. 2. As the closing expression of ver. 1 in the Authorised Version, **after these things**, is not necessary to complete the meaning of the clause to which it is at present added, it seems better to connect it with what follows at the beginning of the second verse. It thus constitutes a resumption of the same expression in ver. 1, and introduces the true beginning of the visions to be described. St. John is prepared for them by passing into the spiritual or ecstatic state. Even in ver. 1, indeed, he was in that state; but here, where the visions begin, there is a propriety in making special mention of the fact, and the word **was**, which is properly 'became,' may be designed to call our attention to the renewal of the first vividness or fervour of his spiritual condition. Two things are seen:—(1) **A throne set in heaven** (comp. Ezek. i. 26–28). The verb 'set' seems to express not merely that the throne was there, but that it was so by the Divine appointment and arrangement (comp. Jer. xxiv. 1; Luke ii. 34; John ii. 6, xx. 5, 6, 7; Rev. xxi. 16). For the particular shape and aspect of the throne see on ver. 6. (2) **One sitting on the throne.** It is not easy to determine who is meant. That the Sitter on the throne is neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit is indeed obvious from the fact that in later verses He is distinguished from them both (chaps. v. 5, 13, vi. 16). But is He the Father or the Triune God? Commentators generally adopt the former view, but there is much that may seem rather to determine in favour of the latter. The whole scene

is founded upon Isa. vi., where we have not only the throne high and lifted up, the seraphim, and the train filling the temple, but also the *Trisagion*, 'Holy, holy, holy,' etc. The vision of Isaiah, however, is always justly regarded as one of the greatest adumbrations of the Trinity contained in the Old Testament (comp. especially ver. 8, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for *Us?*'), so that we are thus naturally led to think now also of the Trinity. In addition, it has to be observed that one great distinction between the visions of chap. iv. and chap. v. seems to lie in this, that in the former we have the Almighty presented to us as He is in Himself absolutely, that in the latter only are we directly introduced to the Covenant of grace in which we learn to know God as Father. Nor does it seem that there ought to be any peculiar difficulty in accepting this interpretation on the ground that the Son and the Holy Spirit are afterwards spoken of as if distinct from Him who occupied the throne. All that is contended for is, that God is here introduced to us as He is in Himself, and not according to that separation of *hypostases* or personalities revealed to us in other passages of Scripture. We deal as yet with the Divine Being as He exists in Himself, and with Him viewed in that light the conception of Trinity in Unity is fundamentally connected.

Ver. 3. The description of Him that sat upon the throne is given: He was **like unto a jasper stone and a sardius**. It has been noticed that the two stones here mentioned are the first and the last in the 'breastplate of judgment' (Ex. xxviii. 17, 20); but it is difficult to attach any importance to this circumstance, for the order is reversed, the sardius being there the first, and the jasper the last. The analogy of Ezek. i. 27 seems to warrant the inference that the colours of the two stones were not mixed throughout, but that the upper part of the body was marked by the one and the lower part by the other. There can be little doubt, though some interpreters dispute the fact, that the colours of these stones, as well as of the emerald to which the **rainbow round about the throne** was like, are to be understood symbolically. From chap. xxi. 11 we learn that the colour of the jasper was a bright sparkling whiteness, while that of the sardius was a fiery red. The first, therefore, can hardly denote anything but that holiness of God which this very chapter shows to be the feature of His character mainly in view of the sacred writer at the time (ver. 8); the second most naturally expresses the wrath with which He consumes His enemies, and which is represented in the lightnings, etc., of ver. 5 (comp. Ps. i. 3, etc.; Ezek. i. 4).

The colour of the rainbow is described as that of the **emerald**, or green. Not that the other colours are awanting, but that they are subordinate to, or lost in, that green colour, which of all others is the most pleasing to the eye. The object itself, its colour, its Old Testament history, and even the mode of its formation in nature, combine to suggest the meaning of the rainbow, — the holiness and wrath of God encompassed by His covenant grace. It is difficult to say whether we are to think of this rainbow as a half or a whole circle spanning the throne. The mere fact that it is called a 'rainbow' is not conclusive in favour of the former, for the Seer employs his figures with great freedom (comp. i. 13, ii. 17, and the 'green' colour in this verse); while the words 'round about the throne,' and the language used in chap. x. 1, suggest the latter. We are probably to think of the rainbow as either floating above the throne or as encompassing it in a vertical plane. For the rainbow comp. Ezek. i. 28.

Ver. 4. In the next part of the description we are told that there were **round about the throne twenty-four thrones, and upon the thrones twenty-four elders**. It is important to observe the word 'thrones' (not as in the Authorised Version, 'seats') here used by St. John, for there can be no doubt that it is deliberately chosen in order to bring out the fact that the glorified Church of Christ is placed in no lower position than that of the Saviour's and the Father's throne (comp. iii. 21). These twenty-four thrones were like the rainbow 'round about the throne.' It may be a question whether they were within or without the circle of the rainbow. Chap. iii. 21 seems to determine against the latter. But perhaps we are even to think of them as set in the very circle of the rainbow in order to denote standing in the covenant of grace. The thrones were occupied by twenty-four elders; and, as these unquestionably represent the one Church of Christ in its triumphing condition in heaven, the number must be taken from some idea which presented itself to the mind of the Seer as a suitable expression for the *whole* Church of God. The twenty-four divisions of the sons of Aaron, described in 1 Chron. xxiv., might have suggested it, the only difficulty being that this classification of the priesthood belongs to the time of the Temple rather than of the Tabernacle. It seems better, therefore, to have recourse to the doubling of the number twelve, so that the whole number twenty-four may represent the Church in her double aspect as at once the Church of the Old Covenant and of the New. We have already met with this principle of doubling, although in a somewhat different form; and there does not appear to be anything unnatural in resorting to it now. The twenty-four elders, thus embodying the conception of the Church of Christ in her perfected condition, have three characteristics. (1) They are **sitting**, the attitude of rest and honour. (2) They are **clothed in white garments**, the robes of perfect purity, the robes of priests. (3) They have **on their heads golden crowns**, those of chaps. ii. 10, iii. 11, and xiv. 14, in which last passage the same 'golden crown' is assigned to the Son of man. Like Him, they are not only priests but kings. At chap. vi. 11 the 'white robe' alone, without the golden crown, is given to the souls under the altar; but the reason is obvious. These souls are waiting. Here the time of waiting is past. The Church is before us in her triumphing condition.

Ver. 5. The description is continued with the mention of **lightnings and voices and thunders** which **proceed out of the throne**. These represent neither the 'outpouring of the Holy Spirit' nor the 'agency of the Gospel,' but the fact that the throne of God is a throne of judgment (Ps. ix. 7). The world is judged not merely by God Himself, but by His Church (chap. ii. 27). Judgment against sin is a necessary accompaniment both of holiness and love. Nor need it surprise us that such indications of judgment should proceed from the throne at a time when the

Church is regarded as having attained her glorified condition, and is safe from all her enemies, for it is not so much the actual exercise as the attribute of judgment that is now in view, and such an attribute is eternal. These lightnings and voices and thunders, therefore, are not to be regarded as a manifestation peculiar to the moment at which they are witnessed by the Seer: they are essential and perpetual accompaniments of the throne.—In addition there were **seven torches of fire burning before the throne**, which are explained to be the **seven spirits of God**, or, in other words, His one Spirit in the fulness and manifoldness of His operation. Yet it is not the gracious operation of the Spirit by which God calls, enlightens, and sanctifies the world that is in view. It is rather His penetrating influence, similar to that of chap. i. 14, by which He searches the innermost recesses of the heart.

Ver. 6. **And before the throne as it were a glassy sea like unto crystal.** The most various opinions have been entertained regarding the 'glassy sea' here spoken of, some of which may at once be set aside. It can hardly be intended to signify 'the will and law of God in constituting the kingdom of grace,' or 'the mysterious judgments of God,' or 'the purity, calmness, and majesty of God's rule,' for no passages of the Old Testament can be referred to in which these principles of the Divine government are represented by a sea similar to that now mentioned. Other interpretations, again, such as those that understand by it 'Baptism' or 'the volume of the Scriptures,' may also be rejected as having no foundation in the imagery of this book. The idea that the sea is identical with the river of the water of life 'clear as crystal' in chap. xxii. 1, may likewise be regarded as untenable A sea and a river are entirely different from one another, and it is impossible to connect the 'sea' of chap. xv. 2, which must be the same as this one, and upon which those who had overcome took their stand, with the 'river' of chap. xxii. More naturally might we be led to associate the great brazen sea of Solomon's temple (1 Kings vii. 23–26) with the sea here spoken of, were it not that, as a general rule, the imagery of the Apocalypse appears to be taken not from the temple, but from the tabernacle, and the 'laver' of the latter is never called a sea.

In endeavouring to determine the meaning of the figure, we must have recourse to that rule of interpretation so often needed in the Apocalypse, which calls us to supplement the description given of any object in one place by what is said of it in another. Doing so in the present instance, the 'glassy sea' of chap. xv. 2 supplies various hints which may be helpful to us here. That sea is not only glassy, but 'mingled with fire,' an expression which at once suggests the thought of the Divine judgments, while the same thought comes prominently forward in the song sung by those who, standing upon the sea, celebrate the 'righteous acts of the Lord which have been made manifest.' Again, it is to be observed that the song sung by these conquerors is called 'the song of Moses, the servant of God,' as well as 'the song of the Lamb;' and the most natural reference of these words is to the song of triumph sung after the crossing of the Red Sea, of which it is said, 'Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea' (Ex. xv. 1). The propriety of this reference is confirmed by the fact that it is not said of these conquerors that they 'had gotten the victory over the beast' (Authorised Version), or even that they 'had come victorious from the beast' (Revised Version), but that they 'had come victorious out of the beast,' the preposition used distinctly indicating that they had been delivered by escape from their enemies rather than by victory over them in the field. To these considerations let us add that the deliverance of Israel from Egypt had been always appealed to, both by Psalmists and Prophets, as the peculiar token of that providential care and guidance which the Almighty extended to His people (Ps. lxvi. 12; Isa. xliii. 2, 3), and we shall be led to the conclusion that in the 'glassy sea' of this verse we have an emblem of that course of Providence by which God conducts those who place themselves in His hands to their final rest in His immediate presence. The different manner in which the 'sea' is viewed in the words before us, and in chap. xv. 2, seems to favour this conclusion. In the one it is simply 'before the throne,' and under the eye of Him by whom the throne is occupied. It is seen from the Divine point of view, and is therefore only 'clear as crystal.' Its darker are to Him as bright as its more transparent elements. The 'fire' that is mingled with it is not less a part of His counsel than its most pellucid waters: 'the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee' (Ps. cxxxix. 12). In the other it is occupied by man, and is seen from the human point of view. Hence the 'fire,' always there, but not mentioned in the first instance, is now seen. They who stand upon it cannot forget those 'righteous acts' of God which they have witnessed, or the troubled paths by which they have escaped the great enemies of their salvation. Judgment upon their foes, as well as mercy to themselves, marks the whole of that way by which they have been led. It may be only further remarked in conclusion, that to behold in the glassy sea the Almighty's providential guidance of His people harmonizes with the whole spirit of a chapter dealing mainly with creation and providence before we pass in chap. v. to the more special subject of redeeming grace.

The description is continued, and we are next introduced to **four living creatures full of eyes before and behind**, which were **in the midst of the throne and round about the throne**. The living creatures do not support or bear up the throne; nor are they to be thought of as stationed together at the same spot. They are rather at the extremities of two diameters passing through the centre of the round throne, thus preserving perfect symmetry. In other respects the relation of these beings to the throne presents some difficulty, because it is natural to think that the Seer, having begun his description with Him that sitteth on the throne, is now proceeding from the centre outwards. The four living creatures would thus appear to be outside both the Sitter on the throne and the twenty-four elders and the glassy sea. But this is not probable—(1) Because the words describing their position indicate a greater degree of nearness to the throne. (2) Because of the position of the cherubim in the tabernacle. (3) Because in chap. v. 6 the absence of the words 'in the midst of' before 'the four living creatures'

seems to show that the latter are so closely connected with the throne as to be almost a part of it. The real explanation is to be found in this, that the position of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle was *above* the mercy-seat. In like manner the living creatures here spoken of are not on the same level as the throne. Although, therefore, St. John really describes from within outwards what he beheld, and although, before we reach the present point of his description, he has already spoken of the outermost circle, that which bounded the glassy sea, it does not follow that the living creatures were beyond that circle. They were really above it, yet within it; and it is by now lifting his eyes upwards that the Seer beholds them. What has been said finds support in the language of Isa. vi. 2, where the prophet, after speaking of the Lord's sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, adds, 'above it stood the seraphim.' It is remarkable to see how St. John manages to combine the visions of both Isaiah and Ezekiel,—the one the prophet of the coming Saviour, the other the prophet of the restored Church. By the view now taken the harmony of the description is preserved, and the four living creatures are a part of the accompaniments of the throne, and not beyond it.—They are **full of eyes**, we are further told, **before and behind**: they share the attribute of God, seeing in all directions with a penetrating glance (comp. chap. i. 14), that they may the better execute the Divine purposes.

A fuller description of them is now given.

Vers. 7, 8A. **And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature like a bull-calf, and the third living creature had its face as of a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, having each one of them severally six wings, are full of eyes round about and within.** Want of space will not permit us to enter at any length upon the meaning of these remarkable figures, and the writer of this Commentary may therefore be pardoned if he refers to his fuller treatment of the subject in the *Bible Educator*, vol. iii. p. 290. It may be enough to say at present that the points to be chiefly noted are the following:—(1) That the living creatures here are substantially identical with those mentioned in connection with the garden of Eden (Gen. iii.), the Tabernacle (Ex. xxv. 18–20), the Temple of Solomon (2 Chron. iii. 11–13), and the visions of Ezekiel (Ezek. i. 5). Slight modifications of structure are due simply to the fact that the idea intended to be expressed by them had become clearer as time ran on. (2) That a human element has a place in each. Their general form suggests what is human not less than what is bestial. This point is rendered clear by the peculiar method of expression adopted in the case of the third 'living creature' of the present passage. The human figure was characteristic of them all; but, in addition to less distinct indications, the third had also the human face. (3) That, while thus in part human, they are also marked by characteristics taken from other forms of creaturely existence. They have wings, and three of them have respectively the faces of a lion, of a bull-calf, and of an eagle. (4) They do not symbolize attributes of the Almighty. Creaturely position and ministerial functions properly belong to them. (5) If, then, we ask now what they represent, it would seem as if one answer only can be given. They represent in the first place man, but, secondly, man as the crown and head of this lower creation, man with his train of dependent beings brought near to God and made partakers of redemption, thus fulfilling in symbol the language of St. Paul,—that 'the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God' (Rom. viii. 21). (6) Finally, it may be observed that the meaning of the animal faces spoken of is to be found in a direction entirely different from that in which it is usually sought. The animals named are not the emblems of majesty, endurance, and soaring energy, but of strong and fierce rage. They represent qualities that strike terror into the hearts of men, and they suggest the idea of a destructive force which nothing is able to withstand. Thus, then, they now surround the throne of God, from which proceed lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there they symbolize redeemed creation as it adores the holiness and magnifies the righteous judgments of its Lord.

Ver. 8B. **And they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord, who art God, the Almighty, he which was and which is, and which is to come.** The *Trisagion* thus sung by the living creatures is found also in Isa. vi. 3, in a passage which we have already seen lies largely at the bottom of the description of this chapter. It is thus natural to think that it is sung to the glory of God in the same character as that in which He there appears, that it is sung therefore to God in the absoluteness of His being and perfections, and not as specially the Father. With this agrees the fact, seen especially in the last words of this chapter, that it is the glory of God as Creator rather than Redeemer that is especially contemplated throughout the whole vision. The ascription of praise appears to consist of three parts, not as commonly supposed of two. He to whom it is sung is first addressed as 'Lord' or Jehovah, and is then celebrated as 'God;' as 'the Almighty;' and as 'He which was, and which is, and which is to come.' The order of the clauses in the third part is different from that in ch. i. 8. There the Lord Himself speaks, dwelling first upon the thought that He 'is' before mentioning that He 'was' or that He 'is to come.' In singing this song the living creatures 'rest not day nor night.' We are reminded of the words of our Lord in John v. 17, 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work.' The work of God as the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all knows no intermission. He is everywhere present throughout His wide creation, upholding all things by the word of His power, and as marvellous in that work as in the utterance of the first *fiat* which summoned them into being. Therefore do the living creatures, 'full of eyes round about and within,' always waiting upon Him, always watching Him, never rest from adoring, as He never rests from working.

The *Trisagion* of the living creatures immediately awakens the response of the whole Church of Christ represented by the twenty-four elders.

Ver. 9. **And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever.** In these words we have

a description of the *Trisagion* which has just been sung, and the description introduces the fact that the four-and-twenty elders are stirred by the lofty melody. It is remarkable that this should be the order of the song of praise. We might have expected that the twenty-four elders as representing the Church would be first, and that by them the representatives of creation would be stirred to a like enthusiasm. As it is, the order is reversed. The explanation is to be sought in the general character of this chapter, as compared with the one that follows it. The song raised is not so much one of praise for redemption, as of praise for that creation and providence of God which preceded and prepared the way for redemption. Redeemed creation therefore begins it; but it is immediately taken up by the Church.

Ver. 10. **The four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying.** Three acts of worship and homage on the part of the elders are described, 'falling down,' 'worshipping,' and 'casting their crowns before the throne.' It is not necessary to ask whether the crowns thus cast down are again resumed, for it is simply the act of homage that is described. The song of the Church follows.

Ver. 11. **Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to take the glory, and the honour, and the power, for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and they were created.** In the response thus proceeding from the Church, we mark a higher tone than in the song of the four living creatures to which the response is given (ver. 9). The word 'our' is introduced, marking the more intimate relationship in which these redeemed ones stand to God. The word 'power' is substituted for 'thanks,' not that they fail in gratitude, but that, in the very excess of gratitude, they completely forget themselves. The article is introduced before each substantive, not to carry us back to the 'glory,' etc., of ver. 9, but to show that what is present to their minds is 'the' glory, 'the' honour, and 'the' power, which are the absolute possession of the Almighty. Hence also it seems better to translate the verb by 'take' than by 'receive' (comp. chaps. v. 7, 9, xi. 17). Lastly, the verb to take is in the aorist not the present tense, an indication that those who use it are contemplating in thought the completion of God's great plan, and His victory over all His enemies, as an accomplished fact. The particulars embraced under the word 'because' refer primarily to creation; and so far, therefore, the majority of commentators are right in saying that the Almighty is here celebrated as creation's God. Yet it is not enough to say this. The Church cannot view God first as Creator simply, and then as Redeemer. Her view of Him is one, and in the works of His hands, as well as in the provisions of His grace, she beholds her redeeming God. Redemption is the final issue of all the works of God. But, feeling thus, we may pause at the thought of creation, and may praise Him who called it into being for this end. Thus looked at also, there is no tautology in the last two clauses of the verse. 'Thou didst create all things,' that is the simple fact. 'Because of Thy will,' etc., is more than the fact; it is the ground upon which their creation rested, that they might be the expression of the will of Him who creates that He may have a creation in His Eternal Son. —The combination of 'were' and 'were created' is undoubtedly very difficult to understand. The first verb does not mean 'came into being;' nor can it mean that, having had no existence before, they existed after God created them; for, in that case, the order of the two clauses ought to have been reversed. Besides which, it is not the manner of St. John to apply the verb 'to be' to temporary and passing objects. No explanation seems possible but that which leads us to think of an eternal type existing in the Divine mind before anything was called into existence, and in conformity with which it was created when the moment of creation came. The idea thus expressed is very similar to that of Heb. viii. 5, 'See that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the Mount.'

CHAPTER V. 1-14.

Preparatory Visions (continued).

1 AND I saw in[1] the right hand of him that sat on the throne
a [a]book[2] written within and on the backside,[3] [b]sealed[4]
2 with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with
a loud[5] voice, Who is worthy to open the book,[6] and to loose
3 the seals thereof? And [c]no man[7] in heaven, nor in earth,[8]
neither[9] under the earth, was able to open the book,[6] neither[10]
4 to look thereon. And I [d]wept much, because no man[7] was
found worthy to open and to read[11] the book, neither[10] to look

[a] Ezek. ii. 9, 10.
[b] Dan. xii. 4.
[c] Rom. xi. 33, 34.
[d] Dan. vii. 15, 16.

[1] on [2] a roll of a book [3] back [4] close-sealed [5] great [6] roll
[7] one [8] on the earth [9] nor [10] or [11] *omit* and to read

5 thereon. And one of[12] the elders saith unto me, [e]Weep not: [e] Jo. xiv. 1.
behold, the [f]Lion[13] of the tribe of Juda, the [g]Root of David, [f] Gen. xlix 9.
hath[14] prevailed[15] to open the book,[6] and to loose[16] the seven [g] Isa. xi. 1.
6 seals thereof. And I beheld,[17] and, lo, in the midst of the
throne and of the four beasts,[18] and in the midst of the elders,
stood[19] a [h]Lamb[20] as[21] it had been slain,[22] having [i]seven [h] Jo. i. 29, 36.
[k]horns and seven eyes, which are the seven [l]Spirits of God [i] Ch. iv. 5.
7 sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took[23] the [k] Deut. xxxiii. 17; Dan. viii. 5
book[24] out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. [l] Jo. xv. 26.
8 And when he had taken[25] the book, the four beasts[26] and[27]
four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having
every[28] one of them[29] [m]harps,[30] and golden [n]vials[31] full of [m] 1 Chron. xxv. 6.
9 odours,[32] which are the prayers of[33] saints. And they sung[34] [n] Ex. xxx. 8.
a new song, saying, Thou art worthy[35] to take the book,[36] and
to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain,[37] and hast
redeemed[38] us[39] to God by[40] thy blood[41] out of every kindred,[42]
10 and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us[43] unto
our God [o]kings[44] and priests: and we[45] shall[46] reign on[47] the [o] Ch. i. 6.
11 earth. And I beheld,[48] and I heard the[49] voice of many angels
round about the throne and the beasts[50] and the elders: and
the number of them was [p]ten thousand times ten thousand, [p] Ps. lxviii. 17.
12 and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, [q]Worthy [q] Phil. ii. 9–11.
is the Lamb that was slain[51] to receive[52] power,[53] and riches,
and wisdom, and strength,[54] and honour, and glory, and bless-
13 ing. And every creature[55] which is in[56] heaven, and on the
earth, and under the earth, and such as are[57] in[58] the sea, and
all[59] that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing,[60] and[61] honour,
and[61] glory, and[61] power,[62] *be* unto him that sitteth upon the
14 throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four
beasts[63] said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty[64] elders fell
down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.[65]

[12] from among [13] *add* which is [14] *omit* hath [15] overcame
[16] *omit* to loose [17] saw [18] living creatures [19] *omit* stood
[20] *add* standing [21] *add* though [22] slaughtered [23] he hath taken it
[24] *omit* the book [25] took [26] living creatures [27] *add* the
[28] each [29] *omit* of them [30] a harp [31] bowls
[32] incense [33] *add* the [34] sing [35] Worthy art thou
[36] roll [37] slaughtered [38] didst purchase [39] *omit* us
[40] in [41] *add* men [42] tribe [43] didst make them
[44] a kingdom [45] they [46] *omit* shall [47] over
[48] saw [49] a [50] living creatures [51] slaughtered [52] take
[53] the power [54] might [55] created thing [56] *add* the
[57] *omit* such as are [58] on [59] *add* things [60] The blessing
[61] *add* the [62] dominion [63] living creatures
[64] *omit* four and twenty [65] *omit* him that liveth for ever and ever

CONTENTS. The vision upon which we enter in this chapter is beheld in the same circumstances as that of chap. iv., and is closely connected with it. The special revelation of the Apocalypse does not yet begin, and the Seer is still prepared for it in the same manner as in the immediately preceding vision. At the same time, the chapter before us is to be considered as introductory not only to the seven Seals (chap. vi.–viii. 1) but to the whole of the main portion of the book. It

thus presents us with a picture of the heavenly guardianship exercised over the Church by God as a redeeming God, or rather by that risen and glorified Saviour who is her protector in every trial, and the solution of all her difficulties. In the last vision we beheld God as the Creator and Governor of all things. In this we behold Him who, when already slaughtered and risen, can say, 'All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth' (Matt. xxviii. 18). The two visions, taken together, may be regarded as a commentary on the words of Jesus in His last discourse to His disciples, 'Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me' (John xiv. 1). By means of both the mind is calmed in the prospect of the approaching troubles of the Church. Before she enters upon them we know that hers shall be the victory.

Ver. 1. The book beheld by the Seer is **on**, not 'in' (comp. chap. xx. 1) **the right hand of him that sat on the throne**, and it shall be opened for the inspection of all His saints (comp. Dan. xii. 10; Mark iv. 11). Although God's 'judgments are a great deep,' His 'secret is with them that fear Him.' The Greek word commonly translated 'book' was really a 'roll,' after the fashion of the sacred rolls of the Jewish synagogues. This ought to appear in the translation, as it is otherwise impossible to attach a meaning to the important statement that it was written both **within and on the back**. Such a translation is also the more necessary, because the description of the 'roll' is intended to correspond with, and is indeed taken from, that in Ezek. ii. 9, 10, 'And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and lo, a roll of a book was therein; and he spread it before me: and it was written within and without.'—That the roll was written both 'within and on the back' is apparently intended to do more than indicate the richness and fulness of the contents. It indicates also that the whole of these had been determined by God Himself. No other might add to them.—The roll is **close-sealed**,—a strong expression, to mark the mysterious and inscrutable nature of its contents. The same idea is also brought out by the mention of the **seven seals**.

It may be greatly doubted if the number seven is to be understood as denoting nothing further than the number itself. The seven churches are one Church, the seven Spirits one Spirit. Why not the seven seals one seal? The number one is elevated into the sacred number seven in order to indicate the completeness of the sealing. By this view, which analogy commends, we are saved all the questions raised by commentators as to the mode in which the seals were fastened to the roll, and as to the possibility of conceiving how each of them could secure a certain portion only of the contents. Even the successive openings of the seals need not imply more than a further unrolling of the parchment. The seals are *successively* broken in order to comply with the requirements of the poetic delineation.

The general nature of the contents of the roll may be gathered from the reference to that of Ezekiel (chap. ii. 10),—'lamentations, and mourning, and woe.' The revelation itself, afterwards given to the Seer, confirms this. Judgment upon the Church's foes is the prominent idea of what the roll contains.

Ver. 2. The **angel** of this verse is **strong, and his voice is great**, because his cry has to be heard in every region of the universe, in heaven, in earth, and in Hades (comp. chap. x. 3). That an 'angel' raises the cry may remind us of the interest taken by angels in the plan of redemption and in the fortunes of the Church (comp. 1 Pet. i. 12). At the same time, it may be nothing more than a part of that imagery of this book of which we have already spoken (see on chap. i. 20).

Ver. 3. **And no one in heaven, nor on the earth, nor under the earth, was able to open the roll, or to look thereon.** As in Phil. ii. 10, the universe is designated under the three divisions here mentioned. It is implied that no answer is given to the cry. Hence

Ver. 4. **And I wept much.** There is nothing in this weeping inconsistent with the fact that a revelation had been promised (chap. iv. 1). That promise is already in course of being fulfilled; but the Seer does not know how far it is to extend. Therefore he weeps because he fears that the revelation may be already about to close. Besides this, there is nothing unnatural in the supposition that the promise may not at this instant have been clearly present to his mind. He is completely rapt away by what is before his eyes. One, however, there is who is worthy to do what no other creature can.

Ver. 5. **And one from among the elders saith unto me, Weep not, behold the Lion, which is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, overcame, to open the roll and the seven seals thereof.** The words are spoken by one of the twenty-four elders, and the propriety of this is obvious. These Elders represent the triumphant Church, which knows by happy experience the blessedness of her victory. Who so fit to magnify the glories of the Lamb? A twofold description is then given of Him of whom 'Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write' (John i. 45), the one part taken from the law, the other from the prophets. (1) He is 'the lion of the tribe of Judah.' The words are from the law (Gen. xlix. 9), where we have the promise of the Messiah as the culminating point of the history of the leading and famous tribe of Judah. Many passages of the Old Testament at the same time remind us that the lion is the emblem not of courage only, but of fierce and destroying power (Job x. 16; Ps. vii. 2, etc.). (2) He is 'the root of David.' The words are now taken from the prophets (Isa. xi. 1), and they mark Jesus out (comp. also chap. xxii. 16) not as the root out of which David springs, but as the sucker which, springing from David as a root, grows up to be a stately tree. In Him the conquering might of David the 'man of war,' as well as of Judah 'chosen to be the ruler' (1 Chron. xxviii. 4), comes forth with all the freshness of a new youth. Compare for the witness thus given to our Lord, Matt. xvii. 3, with the parallel texts.—This Lion 'overcame;' for ver. 9, where the ground of the Lamb's worthiness to open the roll is again celebrated, takes us clearly to the past, and to a work then finished. The verb is therefore to be understood absolutely (as so often in the seven Epistles to the churches), and not to be connected only with the words 'to open,' as if the meaning were simply that the Lamb had overcome all obstacles in the way of opening the roll. Much more is said. He 'overcame.' He is the Archetype and Forerunner

of all them that 'overcome.' He conquered sin, death, the devil—all the foes of God and man. He accomplished in His life, death, and resurrection, a complete and everlasting victory (comp. chap. iii. 21). Therefore, having gained such a victory, He is worthy to open the book which records its issues. No sooner has the Seer been told this than the words are fulfilled in vision.

Ver. 6. The words are fulfilled; yet how differently from what might have been expected! The Seer had been told of a lion, and he beholds **a lamb**; and ver. 9 makes it evident that the lamb is thought of not merely in its gentleness and patience, but as an animal used for sacrifice. From the same verse also it would seem that it is the Paschal lamb that is present to the view of the apocalyptic writer. The particular word used in the original for 'lamb' is found in the New Testament, with the exception of the Apocalypse, only in John xxi. 15; and an argument has been often drawn, from the employment of a different word in John i. 29, 36, against the identification of the apocalyptic figure with the figure of the Gospel. It is enough to reply that in John i. 29, 36, the Evangelist is simply recording words of the Baptist. That he himself preferred the other term arises probably from the fact that he had often heard it, and not at John xxi. 15 alone, from the lips of the Master whom he loved. It is used by him twenty-nine times in this book.—The question of the position of the Lamb is both interesting and difficult. It is generally supposed to have stood *between* the throne, of which the four living creatures may almost be said to form a part, and the twenty-four Elders; thus representing a Mediator between God and man. Some place it in the very centre of the throne. The former idea is the more probable, and it finds a certain amount of confirmation in the word 'came' of ver. 7. We have thus the throne with the four living creatures above (see on chap. iv. 6), then the Lamb, then the twenty-four Elders. The position now assigned to the Lamb is made the more probable by the fact that it was a **Lamb standing**. On a throne one sits.—The 'standing' of the Lamb is deeply important. First of all we may observe that it is as **slaughtered** (not 'slain,' but 'slaughtered') for sacrifice, the word being sacrificial (Ex. xii. 6), that the Lamb appears. Jesus suffering even unto death is before us. But though thus 'slaughtered' the Lamb 'stands,' stands as a living, not lies as a dead, animal. Jesus risen and glorified is presented to our view. In short, we have here the great lesson alike of the Apocalypse and of the Fourth Gospel, that we are redeemed not merely by a Saviour who died, but by one who also rose to everlasting and glorious life. Through all eternity, too, the Risen Lord bears the marks of His earthly sufferings. While His people live for ever in His life, they never cease to feel that they were redeemed in His blood.—The Lamb has still further **seven horns**. In Scripture the horn is always the emblem of strength and force (Deut. xxxiii. 17; 1 Sam. ii. 10; Ps. cxii. 9, cxlviii. 14; Luke i. 69; Rev. xvii. 3); the number 'seven' denotes, as usual, completeness.—It has also **seven eyes**, which are explained to be **the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth**. They are thus substantially the same as the 'seven torches' of chap. iv. 5, and we need say no more of them at present than that they are distinctly connected with the Son as well as with the Father. The word 'sent' belongs to the eyes alone, and not also to the horns.

Ver. 7. **And he came, and he hath taken it out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.** The change of tense is worthy of observation, for it is impossible to agree with those who urge that the two tenses used are simply equivalent to each other. In the very next verse the Seer returns to the tense of the verb 'came' when he says 'took,' and not 'hath taken.' The latter word therefore implies more than 'took.' St. John sees the Lamb not merely take the roll, but keep it. It is His,—His by right of the victory He has won; His as Immanuel, God with us; His not as the Divine Eternal Son only, but as our Redeemer, the Head of His Church; His to unfold in all its meaning for the Church for which He died.—He 'hath taken it,' He is worthy to open it, and it shall be opened. Therefore the song of praise and joy begins, gradually widening until it embraces all creation.

Ver. 8. The **four living creatures** are mentioned first as being nearest the throne; but all they do at this moment is to fall down before the Lamb. There is no reason to think that they have also harps and golden bowls, or that they join in the song of ver. 9. Such a song is unsuitable to beings which mainly represent the material creation; and 'the prayers of the saints' are more naturally presented by the twenty-four priestly Elders. The language of the four living creatures is given at ver. 14. In the remainder of ver. 8, therefore, we have to do only with the Elders. (1) Each has **a harp**, the idea being taken from the Tabernacle and the Temple service. (2) The twenty-four Elders have also **golden bowls full of incense**; not the ordinary bowls used by the priests in the first or outer apartment of the Tabernacle, but rather that used by the high priest when he went into the Holy of Holies once a year. The Church of Christ is clothed with high-priestly functions, and has access into the immediate presence of God. The incense is the **prayers of the saints**, that is, of God's suffering saints. The Elders on their thrones are the representatives of the Church triumphant. It is to be noted, on the one hand, that the latter do not pray for themselves, that for themselves they praise; and on the other, that they are not intercessors for the saints on earth, that they but offer to the Lamb the prayers of the saints, of whom they are, as it were, the hand rather than the mouthpiece. Were we, with some commentators, to understand by 'the saints' those in heaven, it would be difficult to draw a sufficiently clear line of distinction between them and the twenty-four Elders.—The bowls are **full** (comp. John ii. 7, xix. 29, xxi. 11). (3) Further still, the twenty-four Elders sing.

Vers. 9, 10. **And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the roll, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slaughtered, and didst purchase to God in thy blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation; and didst make them to our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign over the earth.** Note again a change of tense. The Elders 'sing,' not 'sang.' The *continuous* worship of heaven is brought before us by the change. The song, as we have seen, is that of the twenty-four Elders alone. It is a 'new'

song, new in its substance, because it celebrates what no imagination of man could before have conceived, and no tongue have uttered,—the glory of a complete redemption. The song is not sung only because the roll is opened: its main burden is the ground upon which the Lamb had been found worthy to open it. It consists of three parts:—(1) 'Thou wast slaughtered.' The sacrificial death of the Lamb is the prominent point; but this death is not necessarily confined to the death upon the cross. It includes the whole of the humiliation and self-sacrifice of Jesus. (2) 'Thou didst purchase,' etc. Applying the rule of interpretation already more than once alluded to, these words must be compared with the larger and fuller expressions of chap. xiv. 3, 4, where we have the addition of the words, 'from the earth' and 'from men.' It is thus not of redemption from death only by the sacrifice of the Lamb that the song before us speaks, but of the fact that, through that sacrifice, believers are taken out of the earth with all its evils, and are translated into the happiness of the heavenly and triumphant Church. Those purchased are gathered out of all the earth,—universality being indicated by the mention of four sources from which they come,—and they are purchased 'in' the blood of the Lamb. Full force ought to be given to the preposition 'in;' for here, as always, the 'blood' of Christ is more than the blood shed at the moment of His death. It is the blood,—the life won through death,—in which He presents Himself before the throne of God, with all His people in Him. 'In' His blood they stand. 'In' His life they live; and they appear before God not merely with their sins washed away, but planted into their Lord's life of perfect obedience and submission to the Father's will. They offer themselves as 'living sacrifices' in Him who, having died once, dieth no more; and, not in virtue only of a righteousness outwardly imputed to them, but also of an inward and real life-union to Him in whom the Father is well pleased, they are 'accepted' and 'complete.' The force of this great truth is lost if we translate either 'by the blood' or 'with the blood.' (3) 'And didst make them,' etc. (comp. chap. i. 6).

At the word 'priests' there seems to be a pause, the following clause constituting a distinct proposition. Nor ought we to translate 'upon,' but 'over,' the earth. They are not upon the earth at all, and cannot therefore be said to be there 'exerting those influences, promoting those principles, and dispensing those laws of righteousness, holiness, and peace which in reality rule all the best developments of life and history.' They are the Church triumphant in heaven. The 'earth' has been their foe, and it is not now reformed by them: it is subdued beneath them. They have the position of Jesus Himself (comp. chap. iii. 21); the final promise to 'him that overcometh' is fulfilled to them; their victory is complete. Finally, we may notice the word 'them' in ver. 10. We might have expected 'us' to be the word used by the triumphant Church as she speaks in the twenty-four Elders who represent her. But the Church views herself objectively; and in the song that she sings, turns her thoughts to Him who has redeemed her. The method of expression is not unlike that of John xvii. 3.

Ver. 11. The song of the triumphant Church has been sung, and an innumerable host of angels takes up the chorus. These angels occupy a place outside of all that we have hitherto met in connection with the throne,—of the throne itself, of the four living creatures, and of the twenty-four Elders. The reason is obvious. The Son of God, in carrying out the process of redemption, took on Him the nature of man, that man might be elevated to a participation in His Divine nature, and it is this process of redemption that is here the main topic of praise. Angels do not share in it, and they accordingly are farther from the throne. The same thought is implied in Ps. viii.; 1 Cor. vi.; Heb. ii. Although, however, angels are not themselves partakers of the redemption spoken of, they have the deepest interest in its glorious results (comp. Luke xv. 10; Eph. iii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 12).—The number of the angels is given in general terms, for they cannot be numbered (comp. Heb. xii. 22). It is remarkable that the smaller number seems to be given last, and various explanations have been offered,—that 'in enormous numbers distinctions vanish,' 'that the larger number preceding, large as it is, is not enough,' that 'the same idea is conveyed whether by climax or anticlimax.' No one of these explanations is satisfactory. The Seer's arrangements of his words are always for the purpose of strengthening his statement in the second part. We may observe that he often uses another word for thousands (chaps. xi. 3, xii. 6, etc.); but it is always with inferior objects, never with men. With men we seem invariably to find the word here employed (chaps. vii. 4, xi. 13, etc.); only once is it used with a material (if even then a material) object (chap. xxi. 16). It would seem, therefore, as if with this word were associated a higher idea than that of number, such as that of spiritual superiority and rule. Thus, though 'thousands' is a numerically smaller number than 'myriads,' the idea associated with it is greater.

Such being the numbers of the angels, we have now their song.

Ver. 12. **Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to take the power, and riches and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing.** It will be observed that the article is connected with 'power' alone, thus showing that this power stands in conception by itself, and that the other parts of the doxology are added for the sake of enlarging the idea, so constituting one whole (comp. note on John xiv. 6). The thought of 'the power' then is no doubt prominent, either because 'reigning' had been spoken of immediately before, or, as has been suggested, because of ver. 3. No one was 'able,' had power, to open the roll, but the Lamb overcame, so as to open it.—This power belongs essentially to the Lamb, and He takes it to Himself (comp. on chap. iv. 11). The other things ascribed to Him follow as parts of the Messianic kingdom, the kingdom of redemption; and it may be noticed that all, taken together, make up the sacred number seven.—The chorus is now still further enlarged.

Ver. 13. **And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea; and all things that are in them, heard I saying, The blessing and the honour and the glory and the dominion be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and**

unto the Lamb for ever and ever. In ver. 3 intelligent beings were embraced under a threefold division. Here, because inanimate as well as animate creation is referred to, the division is fourfold, four being the number of the whole lower creation. It is hardly necessary to make any effort to distinguish the four groups from one another, for the main thought upon which we are to dwell is that of the completeness, the exhaustiveness, of the enumeration, — none are left out. This is also shown by the summary given at the close, 'all things that are in them.' We may notice only that the words 'on the sea' do not refer to ships, but to the creatures of the sea supposed in the imagination of the Seer to have come up out of the depths, and to have taken their place upon the surface.

It may be a question whether we are to include in the number of those by whom this last chorus is sung the four living creatures and the twenty-four Elders. Thinking of them as individuals we ought not; but it seems impossible to say that the objects or beings which they represent do not join in the song. The chorus proceeds from universal nature, from all created things without exception. It is the harmony of the universe in the thought of the completion of God's purposes, in the perfect execution of that which He originally contemplated in Jesus 'the first-born of all creation,' and now 'the head of the body, the Church' (Col. i. 15, 18). Ages of preparation had passed away; one Dispensation had followed another; Prophets had 'sought and searched diligently, searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them;' creation itself had groaned and travailed in pain together until now. How weary had been the years and centuries that had passed amidst the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy, amidst wrongs unrighted and innocent blood poured out like water to gratify the lust of ambition or the fierce spirit of revenge, amidst ignorance instead of knowledge, and sorrow instead of joy. At last the regeneration of the world has come: and in one burst of song all created things send up their shout of triumph and their hymn of praise.

They sing to 'Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb.' That is, they sing a song of richer contents than that of chap. iv. 9–11. The combination of Creator and Redeemer is brought out: the unity after which all things long is reached.—To this song a response is given.

Ver. 14. **And the four living creatures said Amen, and the elders fell down and worshipped.** The four living creatures give the solemn assent 'Amen;' and it has been well observed that they do so in order that the whole service of praise in chaps. iv. and v., after it has reached its widest extension, may return to the point from which it started at chap. iv. 8.—Lastly, the elders fall down and worship in silent adoration. The heart of the Church is for the moment too full to speak: she can only worship in unutterable gratitude and praise.

Thus ends the series of visions contained in the third section of the book, carrying us in thought to the close of all, and, before we enter on the Church's struggle, assuring us of its glorious issue.

CHAPTER VI. 1–17.

The Seals opened.

1 AND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals,[1] and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder,[2] one of the four
2 beasts[3] saying,[4] Come and see.[5] And I saw, and behold a [a]white horse: and he that sat on him had a [b]bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went[6] forth conquering,
3 and to conquer. And when he had[7] opened the second seal,
4 I heard the second beast[8] say,[9] Come and see.[5] And there went out[10] another horse *that was* [c]red: and *power* was given[11] to him that sat thereon[12] to [d]take peace from[13] the earth, and that they should [e]kill[14] one another: and there was given unto
5 him a great sword. And when he had[7] opened the third seal, I heard the third beast[8] say,[9] Come and see.[5] And I beheld,[15]

[a] Ch. xix. 11. [b] Ps. vii. 13, xlv. 5.

[c] Ch. xii. 3.

[d] Mat. x. 34.

[e] Isa. xxxiv. 6; Zeph. i. 7, 8.

[1] seven seals [2] *omit* as it were the voice of thunder [3] living creatures
[4] *add* as with a voice of thunder [5] *omit* and see [6] came
[7] *omit* had [8] living creature [9] saying [10] came forth
[11] omit *power* was given [12] *add* it was given
[13] out of [14] slaughter [15] saw

and lo[16] a *f* black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of
6 balances in his hand. And I heard[17] a voice in the midst of
the four beasts[8] say,[9] A measure of wheat for a *g* penny, and
three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not[18]
7 the *h* oil and the wine.[19] And when he had[7] opened the fourth
seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast[8] say,[9] Come and see.[5]
8 And I looked,[15] and behold a pale horse: and his name that
sat on him was *i* Death, and Hell[20] followed with him. And
power was given unto them[21] over the fourth part of the earth,
to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with[22]
9 the *k* beasts of the earth. And when he had[7] opened the fifth
seal, I saw under[23] the altar the souls of them that were slain[24]
for[25] the word of God, and for[25] the testimony which they held:
10 and they *l* cried with a loud[26] voice, saying, *m* How long, O
Lord,[27] holy[28] and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our
11 blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes
were[29] given[30] unto every one of them;[31] and it was said unto
them, that they should rest yet for a *n* little season, until their
fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed[32]
12 as they *were*,[33] should be fulfilled. And I beheld[15] when he
had[7] opened the sixth seal, and, lo,[34] there was a great *o* earth-
quake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the
13 moon[35] became as blood; and the stars of heaven[36] fell unto
the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely[37] figs, when
14 she is shaken of a mighty[38] wind. And the heaven *p* de-
parted[39] as a *q* scroll[40] when it is rolled together; and every
15 mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the
kings of the earth, and the great[41] men,[42] and the rich men,[43]
and the chief captains, and the mighty men,[44] and every bond-
man, and every[45] free man, hid themselves in the dens[46] and in
16 the rocks of the mountains; and said[47] to the mountains and
rocks,[48] *r* Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that
17 sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for
the great day of his[49] wrath is come; and who shall be able[50]
to stand?

f Jer. iv. 28; Lam. v. 10.
g Mat. xx. 2.
h Ps. xxiii. 5.
i Ch. xx. 14.
k Lev. xxvi. 22–29; Ezek. xiv. 21; Mk. i. 13.
l Heb. xii. 24.
m Lu. xviii. 7.
n Isa. xxvi. 20.
o Ch. viii. 5, xi. 13, 19, xvi. 18.
p Heb. i. 10–12.
q Isa. xxxiv. 4.
r Hos. x. 8.

[16] behold [17] *add* as it were [18] omit *see* thou hurt not
[19] *add* hurt thou not [20] Hades [21] And there was given unto them authority
[22] by [23] underneath [24] that had been slaughtered [25] because of
[26] great [27] Master [28] the holy [29] *omit* white robes were
[30] there was given [31] unto them, even unto each, a white robe
[32] which were about to be killed [33] even as they were [34] *omit* lo
[35] whole moon [36] the heaven [37] unripe [38] great [39] withdrew
[40] book-roll [41] *omit* great [42] princes [43] *omit* and the rich men
[44] and the rich and the strong [45] *omit* every [46] caves
[47] and they say [48] to the rocks [49] their [50] and who is able

CONTENTS. With the beginning of this chapter we enter upon the fourth or leading section of the Apocalypse, extending to chap. xviii. 24. The section contains what had been described in chap. iv. 1 as 'the things which must come to pass.' Chaps. iv. and v. have been only preparatory to

these 'things:' now we come to the things themselves. Here, therefore, the Apocalypse in the stricter sense of the word may be properly said to begin. The object of the section is to unfold the great principles which shall mark the history of the Church in her struggle with the world, throughout the whole period of the present Dispensation. We are to behold the 'Son of man' (chap. i. 13), the Priest and King of His Church, meeting and overcoming His people's foes, establishing His own reign of truth and righteousness, preserving His saints amidst all the sorrows and persecutions which they meet while they follow in His steps, bringing them out even of the degenerate Church herself, and finally conducting them to the perfect happiness of the New Jerusalem. The reader must observe that throughout the whole of this section we have to deal with principles, not with particular historical events. This will become clearer as we proceed; but even at the outset it is necessary to fix the thought firmly in the mind. No single detail of future history will be presented to our view. We shall see only in successive pictures the great relations subsisting between God and man in the present preparatory scene, the relation of the glorified Lord to His own people, and His relation in them to a hostile world upon the one hand, and to a Church which proves faithless to her high vocation upon the other. Christ's perfect kingdom cannot be established except through opposition to the two last-named powers. It cannot therefore be established without a struggle in which the children of God must share the fate of their Lord and Master. He suffered from the enmity both of the Roman Government and of that Church of His day which had been constituted by the appointment, and organized upon the plan, of God Himself. A similar fate awaits His followers; and it is a fate so strange, so contrary to all that they naturally look for, as to make it a matter of supreme importance that they shall be prepared to meet it.

This Revelation begins in chap. vi. with the opening of the roll sealed with seven seals which the Lamb has in His hands. The seven seals are divided into two groups of four and three. Various considerations make this so clear that it is unnecessary to dwell upon it at any length. It will be observed that the first four are distinguished from the three that follow by the fact, that each of them sets before us a rider coming forth upon a horse, and that each is introduced in answer to the cry of one of the living creatures, 'Come,' while nothing of the kind is to be found in the second group. The line of demarcation is also marked by the obvious circumstance that, at the opening of the fifth seal, we pass from the visible to the invisible world (chap. vi. 9),—a circumstance the more worthy of notice because it finds a parallel in the visions of the seven Trumpets and the seven Bowls. Nor is it difficult to see why we should now have a division into four and three, instead of that division into three and four which marked the Epistles to the seven churches. The contest of the Church with the world is before us, and four is the world's number. The visions of the horses and their riders may be compared with Zech. i. 7–11, vi. 1–8.

Ver. 1. **And I saw.** This word 'saw' is to be taken absolutely, as in ver. 2, where it is repeated. **—when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals.** We have no right to translate the original word for 'one' in this and also in the next clause, by the words 'the first.' At chap. iv. 7, where the living creatures are described, the proper expressions for the first, the second, the third, and the fourth are used. Whether, therefore, the living creatures now meet us in the same order as that in which they are mentioned there, it is hardly possible to say. The probability is that they do; but that alone will not entitle us to find a special connection between each of the four and the vision introduced in answer to its 'cry,' as if the lion called for subjugation, the bull-calf for sacrificial slaughter, the man for mourning, and the eagle for tearing the prey. It is enough to say that the visions are introduced with peculiar propriety as an answer to the cry of the living creatures. These beings represent redeemed creation, and it is upon the world that judgment is to fall. This last consideration also shows us that it is a mistake to imagine that the living creatures are mentioned because they are connected with a throne of grace. They are emblems of judgment, not of grace (see on chap. iv. 7); and judgment is about to be executed. The living creature cries 'Come,' not 'Come and see.' In the latter case the cry would be addressed to the Seer. It is really addressed to Jesus (comp. chap. xxii. 17, 20). The cry is answered.

Ver. 2. All the figures of this verse are those of victory,—the horse and its whiteness, the crown, and the distinct statement at the close of the verse (comp. chap. xix. 11, 14). The bow expresses the fact that the Conqueror sees and strikes down His enemies from afar.

The great question is, Who is this rider? On the one hand it might seem as if it cannot be the Lord Himself, for how in that case shall we preserve a perfect parallelism between the first vision and the three that follow it? Can Christ be named in the same category with War, Famine, and Pestilence? On the other hand, if it be not the Lord, how shall we draw a line of distinction between the first and the second vision? Both will symbolize war. Besides which, the last words of the verse **to conquer** so clearly point to complete and permanent victory that it is difficult to limit them to any lower object than the triumphant Saviour. In the Old Testament, too, the judgments of God are three, not four, in number, 'the sword, the famine, and the pestilence' (Ezek. vi. 11, etc.), exactly those found in the three following riders. We are thus led to see here our Lord in His cause and kingdom 'riding prosperously (as in Ps. xlv.), because of truth and meekness and righteousness, His arrows sharp in the heart of His enemies, and His right hand teaching them terrible things.' It is His kingdom, first in Himself and then in His people, who are one with Him and in Him, that passes before the Seer's eye,—a kingdom which shall yet prevail over every adversary. By looking at the matter in this light we preserve the analogy of the four riders, not one of whom is strictly speaking a person, while at the same time we render full justice to each part of the figure. 'Wars' and 'famines and pestilences' are foretold in the same order by our Lord in Matt. xxiv. 6, 7.

Vers. 3, 4. The second horse is **red**, the colour of blood (comp. 2 Kings iii. 22); and he and his rider appear in answer to the second cry **Come.** In this seal Jesus comes just as He came in the

victory of the first seal; but He comes in war and with the sword. There are two ways in which the warfare may be viewed. It may be the struggle of light with darkness and of truth with error, the opposition awakened by the faithful proclamation of the Gospel, and deepened into fiercer enmity as the Gospel makes progress in the world, the contest spoken of by our Lord in Matt. x. 34–36. Were this the struggle alluded to, the 'war' represented by the second rider would be that between the world and the Church, an opposition shaping itself into many other forms than those of the march of infantry or the thunder of artillery. But the words of ver. 4 forbid this interpretation. The war there thought of is not between the Church and the world, but between different portions of the world itself. The 'earth' out of which peace is taken is the ungodly world, and the slaughtering of which we read is not produced by the attacks of the wicked on the good, but by those of the former on one another. War, in short, is here represented as one of the curses or judgments which a world that will not accept the rule of the Prince of peace brings upon itself. It rejects those principles by which alone security and peace can be enjoyed. It yields to its own evil passions, and the sword and the battlefield are the result. In the midst of all this nothing is said of what shall be the condition of the righteous. By and by we shall hear more of them. In the meantime, with the first vision in our mind, we may rest in the assurance that they are safe in the hollow of their Redeemer's hand. Before passing on it may be well to notice the extremely peculiar language in which the effect of the wars here alluded to is described in the second of the three clauses of the description, **and that they should slaughter one another.** The verb is the sacrificial word already met by us in chap. v. 6, and it appears to be chosen for the purpose of bringing out the irony of God's dealings with those who reject His Son. They will not flee to the slaughtered Lamb, taking advantage of His sacrifice. In the righteous judgment of God, therefore, sacrifice of another kind shall be required of them: they shall 'slaughter one another.' Their mutual and fratricidal war is a coming of Jesus to judgment. Compare Isa. xxxiv. 6, 'The Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.'

Vers. 5, 6. The third horse is **black**, the colour of mourning and of famine (Jer. iv. 28, viii. 21, xiv. 2; Mal. iii. 14, margin; Rev. vi. 12), and he comes forth with his rider in answer to the same cry as before, **Come.** Again Jesus comes in this seal just as He had come in the first and second seals, although no more than in these is the rider Jesus Himself. The judgment of this seal is famine. The rider has a pair of balances in his hand in order to weigh the corn. The usual method of dealing out corn was to measure it: here it is to be weighed, not measured, and the mention of the 'measure' in the following words is simply to give us a proper idea of the *quantity* weighed out. The symbol is one of great scarcity (Ezek. iv. 16; comp. Lev. xxvi. 26–28).—A voice, or rather **as it were a voice,** is then heard **in the midst of the four living creatures,** a voice, therefore, which can only come from the throne of God, saying, **A measure of wheat,** etc. The 'measure' referred to was considered to be the amount needed for the daily support of **one man.** The **penny,** nearly ninepence of our money, was the wage of a complete day's work (Matt. xx. 2), and sufficed in ordinary circumstances to purchase about eight 'measures.' The meaning is, that so great would be the scarcity that a man, by working a whole day, would be able to purchase with his earnings no more than an eighth part of what he could purchase at the same price in ordinary times, or than would be sufficient for the necessity of his own life, to say nothing either of his many other wants, or of the wants of his family. He might indeed obtain three measures of barley for the same sum; but to be obliged to depend upon barley was itself a token of severe scarcity.—The scarcity is produced by the rider's 'hurting' the wheat and the barley. The words next addressed to him, therefore,—**and the oil and the wine hurt thou not,**—mean in the first instance that he is not to carry this hurting to an unreasonable extent. 'The tendency of the voice is to check or limit the agency of the rider on the black horse, and to provide that, notwithstanding his errand, sustenance shall not utterly fail.' Yet it is not enough to say this. We are persuaded that the meaning lies much deeper. 'Oil' and 'wine' are not to be regarded only as the privilege of the rich; and thus the symbol cannot be one of the mocking contrast between an abundance of luxuries and a famine of the necessaries of life. In Eastern lands 'oil and wine' are as needful to the poor as to the rich (comp. Deut. xv. 14; Luke vii. 46). But to all, both rich and poor, they were symbols not so much of the ordinary provision for existence as of feasting and joy (Ps. xxiii. 5). Their preservation, therefore, neither means only on the one hand, that a certain check shall be put upon the ravages of a famine by which all are to be overtaken, nor, on the other hand, that the misery to come shall be aggravated by the fact of luxuries being untouched while the necessary aliment of life fails. The symbol seems to point in an entirely different direction, and to show that He who restrains the power of famine does this with especial reference to that joy of life *which is the portion of His people.* While the world suffers He preserves *them.* The plague does not come nigh *their* dwelling. For His elect's sake God spares those things which are the expression of *their* joy. 'Except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened' (Matt. xxiv. 22). The interpretation now given derives confirmation from the use of the verb 'hurt' in chap. vii. 3, 'Hurt not,' that is, do not execute judgment upon 'the earth.' We learn now where the people of God were during these times of trial. We heard nothing of them under the second seal, but they were safe; and, with the usual climax of thought running through this book, we hear under the third seal, speaking on their behalf, the voice of Him who is their unfailing Guardian and Friend. Now they are more than safe. They can say, 'Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over' (Ps. xxiii. 5).

Vers. 7, 8. The fourth horse is **pale** in colour, that is, with the livid paleness of a corpse. He comes forth in circumstances precisely similar to those already met by us, and he is to be looked at in the same way. As in them, so also in him and in his rider Jesus comes to judgment.—The name of the rider is given, **Death,** which is to be

understood in its natural signification. For the mode of expression comp. John iii. 1. He is represented as accompanied by **Hades**, who does not follow after him, but 'with him;' or, in other words, is his inseparable companion. We are to understand Hades here in the same sense as that in which we met it in chap. i. 18 (see note). Neither Hades nor death touches the people of God. The judgment is on the world.—**Authority is given unto them to kill**, etc. May these words not be an echo of the words, 'they sought to kill Him,' so often said of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel? His enemies sought to 'kill' Him: He, in His judgments, 'kills' them (comp. on ver. 4). That there are four things by which death and Hades kill we learn from Ezek. xiv. 21, to which passage there is here an obvious reference. It is true that we have a change of preposition when we come to the last of the four; but this change may be dependent upon the fact that the same preposition which had been used with the first three could not also be used with the last.—The authority to kill spoken of is **given unto them over the fourth part of the earth**, that is, over a fourth part of the ungodly, not of all who dwell upon the surface of the earth. Over the elect, who are preserved unhurt, they have no power. Thus again there is a climax when we pass from the third to the fourth seal. In the third seal provision for the saints was to be left unhurt: in the fourth, while death and Hades accomplish their dread work around them, they are untouched. It is not easy to say why the 'fourth' part of the earth should be selected as the prey of this last and greatest judgment. The suggestion that it is designed to bring out a correspondence with the 'fourth' rider is unsatisfactory, and finds no analogy in chap. viii., where a 'third' part is spoken of. The object may be only to give scope for the climax which we shall hereafter find in comparing the Trumpets and Bowls with the Seals. At this point of the Apocalypse the judgments of God appear in their earliest and most limited range. Were they to extend over the whole earth, there would be no room for the extension of judgment that is to follow. The Seer therefore beheld them exercising their sway only over a part of the earth; and that he chose the fourth, as hereafter the third, part may arise from nothing more than this, that the numbers four and three were so often in his mind, and that a fourth part was smaller than a third.

Such then are the first four seals which, to be understood, must be viewed ideally. They refer to no specific war or famine or pestilence, nor do they even necessarily follow one another in chronological succession. They express the great principle borne witness to by the whole course of human history,—that the world, refusing the yoke and kingdom of the Son of God, draws down upon itself His righteous judgments. These judgments again are confined to no particular period. War, famine, and pestilence, or the troubles and sufferings which they symbolize, darken the whole history of man, and all of them are but ominous forerunners of the more terrible judgment to come, when the Lord shall finally and for ever vindicate His own cause, put all His enemies beneath His feet, and establish His reign of perfect peace and righteousness (Matt. xxiv. 8). During the calamities produced by them, too, the Lord preserves His own. They suffer, but judgments such as these are not directed against them. On the contrary, in sorrow they rejoice, in famine they 'live' by other things than bread, and they are unaffected by the pestilence that walketh in darkness. Even in death itself they do not die, and the spirit in which they are enabled to meet their outward trials is to them 'a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, to the end that they may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which they also suffer' (2 Thess. i. 5).

Ver. 9. **And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slaughtered because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they held.** With the opening of the fifth seal we pass into scenes of a kind in many respects distinguished from those of the first four. No voice of one of the living creatures now cries 'Come:' there are no horses and their riders: we make a transition from what is of earth to what is not of earth.

The Seer beholds first 'the altar.' We have already seen that the whole imagery of the heavenly abode is taken from the structure of the Tabernacle, afterwards copied in the Temple. The only question, therefore, is whether we have here the altar of incense which stood in the holy place, or the great brazen altar of burnt-offering which stood in the outer court. One answer is given to this question by all the most eminent commentators, and it would seem as if one only could be given. It is the latter of the two; and if any difficulty be found in accepting this owing to the fact that we might expect the souls of the saints to be preserved in the inner rather than in the outer sanctuary, the answer will be found in the first consideration to be immediately submitted when we inquire who the saints are. But whether that answer be correct or not, there can be little doubt that we have here a vision of the brazen altar. What is seen under it is the blood (see below) of those slaughtered in sacrifice. Nothing of this kind found a place at the altar of incense, while the command of the law was that the blood of animals sacrificed should be poured out 'at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering, which is before the tabernacle of the congregation' (Lev. iv. 7). Those here referred to had been sacrificed. The word used, the same as that applied to the Lamb in chap. v. 6, leaves no doubt upon the point. They had been sacrificed in the same manner as their Lord; their blood had been shed as His was, and their bodies had been laid upon God's altar to be consumed as an offering acceptable to Him. It corresponds with this that what St. John sees under the altar is in all probability blood. He speak indeed of 'souls,' or rather 'lives;' but to the Hebrew blood and life were equivalent terms; 'the life of the flesh,' he said, 'is in the blood' (Lev. xvii. 11). No shadowy spectres, therefore, were beheld by the Seer. He beheld only blood, but he knew that that blood was the souls or lives of men.

Two important questions demanding consideration meet us. First, What is the period to which these martyred saints belong? Secondly, Are they martyrs in the sense in which that word is usually employed, or do they include a larger number? In reply to the first of these questions, we have to urge that these saints belong neither to

the period of the Neronic persecution, nor to any longer period of Rome's history, nor to the whole Christian era from its beginning to its close. We must agree with those who think that they are saints of the Old Testament Dispensation. (1) Mark where the blood lies. It is under the brazen altar in the Court. The way into the Holiest of all had not yet been manifested. (2) Observe the manner in which their 'testimony' is described. The word used for 'testimony' occurs nine times in the Apocalypse, and in every case (including even chap. xii. 11), except the present and chap. xi. 7 which may be in some respects similar, it is associated in one form or another with the name of Jesus. The absence of any such addition in the words before us can hardly be thought of otherwise than as designed; and, if so, a distinction would seem to be drawn between the 'testimony' here alluded to and the full 'testimony of Jesus.' (3) The word 'Master,' not 'Lord,' of ver. 10 is remarkable. It can hardly be referred directly to Christ: it is rather an epithet of God Himself, to whom it breathes the feeling of Old Testament rather than New Testament relation (comp. Acts iv. 24; Jude 4, Revised New Testament margin). (4) The parallelism of thought between vers. 10 and 11 of this chapter and Heb. xi. 39, 40 is very marked, and confirms what has been said. (5) A powerful argument tending towards the same conclusion is that the saints of the New Testament receive *during their life on earth* that very 'white robe' which is here given to the souls under the altar. Thus in chap. vii. 14, after they have been described as 'standing before the throne and before the Lamb,' it is said of them, in the Elder's inquiry, Who they are and whence they came, that they had 'washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,' words evidently implying that the cleansing and whitening referred to had taken place during the period of their mortal pilgrimage. In chap. iii. 4, they who are described as the 'few names' must have been already clothed in the 'white garments' which they had not 'defiled.' In chap. xix. 8 the Lamb's bride is made ready for the marriage which has not yet taken place, by its being given her to array herself 'in fine linen, bright and pure;' and in the 14th verse of the same chapter, at a time when the Church's victory has not yet been completed, the Rider on the white horse is followed by the armies of heaven 'clothed in fine linen, white and pure.' To the same effect is the counsel addressed to the Church of Laodicea in chap. iii. 18, that she shall buy of her Lord 'white garments,' as well as the description in chap. xix. 8 of what 'fine linen' means, 'for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.' It is true that in chaps. vii. 9, 13 and iv. 4, these white robes are also those of glory in heaven, but it is unnecessary to dwell upon the fact that the believer appears there in the same perfect righteousness as that in which he is accepted here. The 'white robe' of the present passage, therefore, is a more complete justification than that which was enjoyed under the old covenant. It is that referred to by St. Paul when, speaking to the Jews at Antioch of Pisidia, he said, 'By Him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses' (Acts xiii. 39). It is that robe of righteousness which had been promised in Isa. lxi. 10 and Zech. iii. 4, that complete reward for which David longed (Ps. li.), and to which both Jeremiah (chap. xxxi. 34) and Ezekiel (chap. xxxvi. 25) had pointed as the great gift of Gospel times. The promise of the Old Testament, which the saints of God who then lived did not 'receive,' was not simply that of a better country, but of the 'day' of Christ, with all the blessings that should accompany it. In that hope they 'exulted,' and at length they 'saw it and rejoiced' (comp. note on John viii. 56). Not until Christ came were even Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their faithful seed perfected. At death they passed into a place of holy waiting until the great work of redemption should be finished; and then only did they receive what is now bestowed upon the follower of Jesus even during his earthly life. Only under the Christian Dispensation have they been made equal to us; and at this moment they wait, as we wait, for the making up of the full number of the redeemed, and for the open acknowledgment and acquittal which shall yet be granted them. (6) Finally, it ought to be noticed that in the verse before us the saints referred to are not said to have been killed under the fifth seal which, like all the others, starts from a point of time contemporaneous with the beginning of the Christian age. It is rather distinctly implied that they had been killed before. The moment the seal is broken their blood is seen.

These 'souls underneath the altar,' therefore, are the saints of the Old Testament waiting for the completion of their happiness by having added to them their 'fellow-servants' of New Testament times.

The second question is not less important than the first. We cannot enter upon it fully, and it will meet us again. In the meantime it is enough to say that the analogy of other passages of the Apocalypse leads to the conclusion that the persons alluded to are not confined to those who had actually been *killed* in the service of God. It includes all who had remained faithful unto death, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the long line of those who, whether known or unknown, had died in faith. All were offerings. All had a life of struggle. All shared 'the reproach of Christ' (Heb. xi. 26); and all had an interest in crying, 'Lord, how long?' If, therefore, martyrs in the ordinary sense of the term are to be first thought of, it seems to be only as the type and emblem of the whole company of those who had lived and died in faith.

Ver. 10. **And they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?** 'They' cried (yet not the martyrs themselves but the blood which represents them) as the blood of Abel cried (Gen. iv. 10). The cause of holiness and truth suffering in them was at stake; and only as they identify themselves with this great cause do they 'cry.' They cried with a 'great' voice in the earnestness of their cry. The cry is addressed to Him who is spoken of as 'Master,' and by whom we are most probably to understand not Christ but God. There is much indeed that might lead us to think of the former, but the song of chap. xix. 1 appears to determine in favour of the latter. Their confidence that God will deliver is confirmed by the thought of the attributes which distinguish Him. He is 'the

holy:' therefore He will the more surely punish wickedness. He is the 'true,' that is, certainly not the truthful, which is never the meaning of the word here employed, but either the Being who alone has true and substantial existence, or the Master who completely corresponds with the idea of what a Master ought to be.—Their cry is, How long will it be before the Judge arises to claim the victory as His own, and to punish His adversaries as they deserve? Those who are thus to be judged are then described as 'they that dwell upon the earth;' and by the 'earth' here, as almost always in the Apocalypse, is to be understood the ungodly earth: those that dwell on it are the ungodly. It may be observed that *all* the ungodly are included. This is allowed by the best commentators, and it supplies a strong argument in favour of what was said with regard to the number of those underneath the altar,—there *all* the godly belonging to the time spoken of; here *all* the ungodly.

Ver. 11. To the cry of these martyred souls an answer is given both by deed and word. By deed; for **a white robe**, denoting the purity of saints perfected in Christ, was bestowed on each of them (comp. chaps. iii. 5, iv. 4, vii. 9). This robe is the garment of *all* who overcome,—another indication that *all* such, and not martyrs only, are included in the souls underneath the altar. To this act of grace words are added, telling them that they must rest a little space until their fellow-servants of the New Testament Dispensation shall be completed, and all the children of God shall be gathered together, 'no wanderer lost, a family in heaven.'

Ver. 12A. **And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake.** The verb 'saw' is again to be taken absolutely as in vers. 1, 2, 5, 8. The things seen divide themselves naturally into four groups; and we need not add to what has been already said as to the meaning of this number. (1) 'A great earthquake,' which must be understood in its usual sense as a shaking of the earth alone (chaps. viii. 5, xi. 13, 19, xvi. 18), and not as a general shaking including heaven as well as earth. The celestial phenomena immediately following are quite independent. The idea of the earthquake may be in part that of Matt. xxiv. 7, but it is especially that of Matt. xxiv. 29. The figure is frequently used in the Old Testament as a symbol of the judgments of God about to come upon a sinful world (Ps. lx. 3; Isa. xiii. 13; Hag. ii. 6, 22, 23).

Vers. 12B, 13, 14A. **And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood, and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind, and the heaven withdrew as a book-roll when it is rolled together.** (2) We pass from earth to the heavens. The vision is still couched in the language of Matt. xxiv. 29, and that again rests upon the figures with which Old Testament prophecy had made the Jews familiar (Isa. xiii. 10, l. 3; Jer. iv. 23; Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8; Joel ii. 31, iii. 15; Amos viii. 9, 10; Mic. iii. 6). The sun becomes 'black as sackcloth of hair,' the coarse sackcloth made of the black hair of camels. His light is quenched; and, instead of shining with his splendour in the sky, he appears as a great black orb. It is obvious that here, as in innumerable parts of the Apocalypse, we are to content ourselves with the main idea of the writer, and not to demand prosaic verisimilitude. —The 'whole' moon next becomes as blood, the word 'whole' denoting the moon at its full size, so that the spectacle may be the more terrible. The addition is not found in the Old Testament prophecies upon which the language before us rests. It is made by the Seer under the feeling that no ancient prophet had foreseen such sights of woe as he had been commissioned to reveal.—'The stars of the heaven' next fall to the earth, like unripe figs when the fig tree is shaken by a great wind. Firmly as they appear to be set in heaven, they are yet as easily displaced as the unripe fig when a 'great wind' blows. They fall in a moment.—'The heaven' itself is touched last of all. Like a book-roll, it is rolled together, and is no longer the glorious firmament that it has been.

Ver. 14B. **And every mountain and island were moved out of their places.** (3) In these words the third member of the description follows. It will be observed that we have in them much more than the mention of the earthquake in ver. 12. An earthquake shakes the earth, but when the shaking is over things return, no doubt with some exceptions, to their old positions. Here all things are 'moved out of their places;' the confusion and overthrow are complete.

Vers. 15–17. (4) These verses contain the fourth and last member of the description. Of the persons on whom the terror of God's judgments falls prominence seems to be given to the first, the **kings**. The words **of the earth** are associated with them, and the other appellations follow for the purpose of enlarging and completing the idea. The word 'earth' must again be understood in its usual acceptation, not the neutral earth, but the earth as opposed to heaven, the seat of ungodliness and sin. The righteous have thus no place in the enumeration which follows; but the ungodly without exception, whatever their rank or station, are divided into seven groups in order to indicate that none escape. In alarm at the awful judgments which they behold immediately impending, they rush into the caves of the mountains and into the rents of their rocks, in order to seek not safety but destruction. The crushing of the rocks is nothing compared with appearing before Him who sitteth upon the throne, and before the wrath of the Lamb. The question has been asked, how it happens that these 'kings,' etc., use the language of Christians in speaking as they do of Him **that sitteth upon the throne** and of **the Lamb**. But the answer is not to be found in the idea that we have in them the Church in its Laodicean state. The use of the word 'earth' would alone forbid such an interpretation. We have rather here one of the most striking lessons both of the Apocalypse and of the Fourth Gospel,—that those who reject Jesus shall have in this their chief element of condemnation, that they shall fully know what they have done. They shall believe, but believe to their destruction, not to their salvation. They have loved the darkness. At last they shall have light, but of what a kind! They shall see, as do the redeemed, Christ's glory, but with this tremendous difference that, along with that sight, their eyes shall be opened to behold their own sin and folly in having rejected Him. The very fact that they

are now compelled to use Christian language, to confess in trembling to the truths which they have hitherto scorned, is the most fearful element in their woe.

There remains still one question regarding the sixth seal which must be briefly noticed. Does it bring us down to the end of the world, to the final judgment; or does it not? One answer only can be given,—that we reach here the beginning of the end. The use of the word **great** before **day** forbids the thought of judgments exhibited in phenomena of the world's history which are either simply local or preparatory to the final issue. Nor, when the structure of the Apocalypse is taken into account, does it militate against this view that, when we come to the Trumpets and the Bowls, we shall have to go back to a point of time much earlier than that at which we stand, and that any thought of a continuous progression of the events of the book will thus be destroyed. To look for continuous progression is forbidden by the Apocalypse itself (see Introduction). With the sixth seal we reach the end, but the end is not yet described.

CHAPTER VII. 1–17.

Visions of Consolation.

1 AND[1] after these[2] things[3] I saw four angels standing on[4] the [a]four corners of the earth, holding[5] the [b]four winds of the earth, that the[6] wind should not[7] blow on the earth, nor
2 on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the [c]east,[8] having the[9] seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud[10] voice to the four angels, to whom it was
3 given[11] to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, [d]Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have[12] [e]sealed the
4 servants of our God in[13] their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were* sealed[14] an hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of[15] all the tribes[16] of the
5 children of Israel. Of[17] the tribe of Juda *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of[17] the tribe of Reuben *were* sealed[18] twelve thousand. Of[17] the tribe of Gad *were* sealed[18] twelve thou-
6 sand. Of[17] the tribe of Aser *were* sealed[18] twelve thousand. Of[17] the tribe of Nepthalim *were* sealed[18] twelve thousand. Of[17] the tribe of Manasses *were* sealed[18] twelve thousand.
7 Of[17] the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed[18] twelve thousand. Of[17] the tribe of Levi *were* sealed[18] twelve thousand. Of[17] the tribe
8 of Issachar *were* sealed[18] twelve thousand. Of[17] the tribe of Zabulon *were* sealed[18] twelve thousand. Of[17] the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed[18] twelve thousand. Of[17] the tribe of Ben-
9 jamin *were* sealed[18] twelve thousand. After this[19] I beheld,[20] and, lo,[21] a great [f]multitude, which no man could number, of all nations,[22] and kindreds,[23] and people,[24] and tongues, stood[25] before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white
10 robes, and [g]palms in their hands; and cried[26] with a loud[27]

[a] Ch. xx. 8. [b] Dan. vii. 2. [c] Ezek. xliii. 4, xliv. 2, xlvii. 1; Mal. iv. 2. [d] Ch. vi. 6; 2 Pet. ii. 9. [e] Ezek. ix. 4, 6; 2 Cor. i. 22. [f] Gen. xiii. 16, xv. 5; Mat. viii. 11. [g] Lev. xxiii. 40; Jo. xii. 13.

[1] *omit* And [2] this [3] *omit* things [4] at [5] *add* fast [6] no
[7] *omit* not [8] sunrising [9] a [10] great [11] *add* them
[12] shall have [13] on [14] omit *and there were* sealed [15] sealed out of
[16] every tribe [17] Out of [18] omit *were* sealed [19] these things
[20] saw [21] behold [22] every nation [23] tribes
[24] peoples [25] standing [26] they cry [27] great

voice, saying, [h] Salvation to[28] our God which sitteth upon the [h] Ps. iii 8.
11 throne, and unto the [i] Lamb. And all the angels stood round [i] Ch. v. 13.
about the [k] throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts,[29] [k] Ch. iv. 6.
and fell[30] before the throne on their faces, and worshipped
12 God, saying, Amen: Blessing,[31] and[32] glory, and[32] wisdom,
and[32] thanksgiving, and[32] honour, and[32] power, and[32] might,
13 *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the
elders answered, saying unto me, What are[33] these which are
14 arrayed in white robes?[34] and [l] whence came they? And I [l] Isa. xlix. 21. Cp. on ver. 16.
said[35] unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These
are they which[36] came out of great[37] [m] tribulation, and have [m] Mat. xxiv. 21.
washed[38] their robes, and made them [n] white in the blood of [n] Zech. iii. 4. [o] Heb. ix. 10-14.
15 the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and
serve[39] him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth
16 on the throne shall [p] dwell among them.[40] They shall [q] hunger [p] Isa. iv. 5, 6. [q] Isa. xlix. 10
no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light[41]
17 on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst
of the throne shall [r] feed them,[42] and shall [s] lead[43] them unto [r] Ps. xxiii. 1. [s] Isa. xlviii. 21.
living fountains of waters:[44] and God shall [t] wipe away all [t] Isa. xxv. 8.
tears[45] from their eyes.

[28] unto [29] living creatures [30] they fell [31] The blessing
[32] *add* the [33] *omit* What are [34] *add* who are they? [35] have said
[36] that [37] the great [38] and they washed [39] they serve
[40] shall spread his tabernacle over them [41] strike
[42] as a shepherd tend them [43] guide
[44] fountains of waters of life [45] every tear

CONTENTS. The seventh chapter of this book contains two visions, and it is of importance to determine the relation in which they stand to the general plan of the book, as well as to what immediately precedes and follows them. We may at once conclude that they are not a part either of the sixth or of the seventh seal. They have nothing in common with the former, while at the same time they are distinctly separated from it by the formula of ver. 1, 'After this.' The opening of the seventh seal, again, does not take place until we reach chap. viii. 1. There can thus be no doubt that the whole seventh chapter is an episode, intended to sustain and comfort the Church before the judgments of the Trumpets, following immediately upon the seventh Seal, fall upon the world. It might have been feared that amidst these judgments even the Church would perish. But that cannot be. Under the Seals we found traces of the great truth that she shall be safe, yet only traces, distant intimations rather than clear revelations upon the point. Now we have more. In the prospect of the direr calamities soon to be unfolded the Church is to receive richer consolation. These sufferings of the righteous, it ought to be remembered, are wholly distinct in character from the judgments that are to fall upon the 'earth.' They are the discipline of a Father's hand, the 'cleansing' of His vine by the great Husbandman, the 'tribulation' (ver. 14) in which Christians have their part in the sufferings of Jesus.

Ver. 1. The words **After this** denote succession of visions rather than of time.

The Seer beholds **four angels standing at the four corners of the earth.** The number four is that of the world; and hence 'the four corners,'—North, South, East, West,—as well as four angels (comp. chap. xx. 8). By the **winds** which these angels hold fast we are no doubt in the first place to understand natural winds, although it is clear that storm-winds or tempests must be intended. Yet it is as impossible to think here of mere winds as it is to think of mere earthquakes or of mere changes in sun and moon in the preceding chapter. The idea of four storm-winds bursting forth, when they are let loose, from all the four quarters of the earth is too unnatural, almost too grotesque, to be entertained. The winds are those upon which the Almighty rides, and the symbols of His judgments (comp. 1 Kings xix. 11; Jer. xxii. 22, xlix. 36; Ezek. i. 4; Dan. vii. 2; Zech. xi. 1; Rev. vi. 13). But God stays them at His pleasure, and there is a calm. Thus Ps. xxix. describes a storm coming up from the 'great sea,' shaking the land, dashing the cedar trees, and dividing the flames of fire. The storm, however, is in the hands of One who sitteth King for ever, who gives strength unto His people, who blesses His people with peace. It is to be noticed that the winds here are not only ready but eager to be let loose: hence the four angels do not only hold them, but **hold them fast.**—The object is that no wind should blow **on the earth, nor on the sea,**

nor on any tree. The word 'tree' is used in its ordinary sense, not as meaning the great ones of the earth,—an interpretation that would necessarily lead us to think of the 'sea' as the mass of the heathen nations, and of the 'land' as the stubborn Jews. Such meanings may be possible. They are by no means out of keeping with the tone of the Apocalypse. But they are not natural at present. The word, therefore, ought to be taken literally—'trees' being probably selected from amongst other objects on the surface of the earth because they are the first to be prostrated before the storm-wind. The figure used in this verse is at once appropriate and natural. We may compare Hamlet's account of his father's care of his mother—

> 'So loving to my mother,
> That he might not let even the winds of heaven
> Visit her too roughly.'

Vers. 2, 3. The more peculiar contents of the vision follow. **And I saw another angel ascending from the sunrising,** from the quarter whence issues that great orb of day which is the symbol of the Sun of righteousness (comp. chap. xvi. 12).—**Having a seal of the living God,** of that God who both has life and gives life.—**And he cried with a great voice to the four angels** already spoken of, telling them not to execute the judgments with which they were entrusted,—**till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.** In Ezek. ix. 4, a man 'clothed with linen and having a writer's inkhorn by his side' is instructed to go through the midst of Jerusalem, and to set 'a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.' That mark is for their security, and for a similar purpose the seal of this angel is applied. The sealed shall be kept safe in the times of trial that are to come. Their Redeemer will set them as a seal upon His heart and upon His arm (Cant. viii. 6), and no one shall pluck them out of His hand. For the opposite marking, the mark of the service of the Beast, see chaps. xiii. 17, xiv. 11. The Seer next beholds the number of the sealed.

Vers. 4–8. One or two subordinate points may be noticed before we ask who these sealed ones are. (1) There is no difficulty in determining the manner in which the number 144,000 is obtained. First we have the number 12, that of the witnessing Church, taken from the 12 tribes of Israel; and, multiplying by 1000, we have the number taken from each tribe. This number is then multiplied by 12 for the twelve tribes, and yields 144,000. (2) In looking at the names of the tribes several remarkable circumstances at once strike the eye. (*a*) Dan is omitted. The reasons generally assigned for this are either that Dan had been peculiarly given to idolatry (Judg. xviii. 1–31), or that it had disappeared as a tribe in the days of St. John. Both reasons are unsatisfactory; the first, because the idolatry of Dan does not appear to have been so excessive as to warrant its extinction; the second, because the fact has not been ascertained, and because, even though ascertained, it would be little to the purpose; for, as in the case of the Tabernacle, the Apostle takes the ancient condition of things for his guide. A more probable explanation is to be found in the words of Gen. xlix. 17, 'Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path,'—a prophecy which, interpreted in a good sense denoting subtlety and skill in dealing with enemies, may have been the occasion of the tribe's choosing a serpent for its emblem. When we remember St. John's allusion to 'the old serpent' in chap. xii. 9, and the possibility that in chap. ii. 24 he has the early heretical sect of the Ophites in his eye, the supposition seems not improbable that this connection of Dan with the 'serpent' may have been enough to make the Seer leave out that tribe from his enumeration of the twelve which constitute the Christian Church. It may be worth while also to recall to mind that, when the twelve apostles received God's seal of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, one who had originally belonged to their number was no longer there. He had been cast out because he was 'a devil,' and his place had been supplied in order to make up the sacred twelve. St. John may have seen in this a sufficient indication that, when the twelve tribes making up the Church were to be sealed, it was proper that one of the original number, because found unworthy, should be absent, and its place be taken by another. (*b*) Levi is included, and this, owing to the peculiar inheritance of Levi, was not usual in the catalogues of the tribes given us in the later books of the Old Testament. The explanation usually offered seems correct. In the Old Testament Levi was the priestly tribe, and stood apart; in the New Testament such distinctions have passed away. All Christians are priests. The distinction between ministers and people are distinctions of function only, and do not touch the personal relations of each man to God. (*c*) Instead of Ephraim Joseph is substituted. This seems to be due to the fact that throughout the Old Testament history Ephraim was peculiarly untheocratic, so that it became the symbol of opposition to faithful Judah (Ps. lxxx. 2; Isa. vii. 17; Jer. vii. 15). (3) The order in which the tribes are named is worthy of notice. It is possible, indeed, that because of chap. v. 5 Judah may come first, and that Benjamin, as the youngest, may with propriety be last. Beyond this it seems as if nothing can be said. The tribes are not mentioned either in the order of the birth of the sons of Jacob, or of any pre-eminence we may suppose to belong to the children of his wives over those of his maid-servants; nor is their order that of the lists presented to us in Ezek. xlviii. 1–27 and 31–34.

We are now prepared for the further and more important inquiry, Whom do the 144,000 represent? Is it simply Jewish Christians? and, if not, Is it a select number out of the Christian community, or the whole of that community itself? These two inquiries may be taken together, and the following considerations will supply the answer:—

1. According to the analogy of the Apocalypse, in which Jewish terms are christianised and heightened in their meaning, the word 'Israel' must be understood not of Jewish only but of all Christians. Such is also the lesson taught by the strain of the New Testament generally (Rom. ii. 28, 29, ix. 6, 7; Gal. vi. 16; Phil. iii. 3).
2. The number 144,000 is a complete number—the number of the Church (not of Israel in its more limited sense) multiplied by twelve, and then taken a thousandfold. Christians so numbered can hardly be Jewish believers alone, but must be the Church of Christ in its widest extent

and final comprehensiveness. 3. There is no limitation of the 144,000 in the description given of them in the third verse of the chapter, 'Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed *the servants of our God* on their foreheads.' These words seem to imply that all the servants of God, and not merely a select portion, were to be sealed, just as the whole earth, and not a part of it only, was to be left unhurt. 4. In the fourteenth chapter of this book we have again the 144,000 brought before us, and there the vision follows the description of the enemies of Christ, as these enemies have reference not to any one portion of the Church but to it all, while it precedes that harvest and vintage of the earth which are to be wide as the whole world in their effects. 5. In chap. xiv. 1 the 144,000 standing with the Lamb upon Mount Zion are spoken of as having 'His Father's name written on their foreheads;' and in chap. xxii. 4 this trait marks *all* the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem—'and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.' 6. The changes made in the tribes as here given, although the grounds of them may not be very clear, indicate in part at least that we are not to think of the literal Israel, and thus strengthen the argument. 7. In chap. xxi. 12 the 'twelve tribes' evidently include all believers. 8. There is another marking spoken of in various passages of this book, that by Satan of his own (chaps. xiii. 16, 17, xiv. 9, xvi. 2, xix. 20, xx. 4), and no one acquainted with the style of St. John will doubt that this marking is the direct antithesis of the sealing by God. A comparison of the several passages referred to will also show that in both cases a sealing or marking on 'the forehead' is spoken of. Now it will not be denied that the mark of the beast is imprinted upon *all* his servants, and the contrast requires that the seal of God should be equally imprinted upon *all* His people. 9. The plagues that are to come threaten all, Gentile as well as Jew: the sealing must in like manner protect all believers. 10. The next following vision has its scene laid in heaven, not on earth; so that, if Gentile Christians are not included among the tribes of Israel, they are nowhere spoken of as 'sealed.' We conclude, therefore, that we have before us neither Jewish Christians in particular, nor a select portion out of the whole Christian Church. To the Church of God in every age and land the sealing is applied, and in it there is neither Jew nor Gentile; all its members are one in Christ Jesus.

A second important question meets us, At what time does the sealing take place? The answer is involved in what has been said of its comprehensiveness. If the 144,000 are the whole Church of God, then the sealing goes on during all the Church's history. Through all the period of their earthly struggle God has been preserving and sealing His own. The vision has relation to no particular or limited period.

Another vision follows.

Ver. 9. The vision now introduced is distinguished from the former by the fact that it belongs to heaven, while the sealing took place on earth. Those beheld stand **before the throne and before the Lamb** (comp. iv. 5, 6, 10, v. 8, etc.), and the other particulars correspond. They are **clothed with white robes**, emblematic of priestly purity **They have palms in their hands**, not palms of victory at heathen games, but palms of festive joy, especially of the feast of Tabernacles. The whole scene appears to be modelled upon that of John xii. 12, etc., even the **great multitude** here reminding us of that mentioned there.

This great multitude is **out of every nation**, the word 'nation' being then enlarged and supplemented. The terms used are four, an indication of the universality of the host. But not Gentile Christians alone are included; Jewish Christians must also be referred to; a fact throwing a reflex light upon the vision of the sealing, and confirming the conclusion already reached, that the 144,000 are not to be confined to the latter class. Nor does the statement that this is a multitude **which no man could number** prove that it is a larger company than the 144,000, for these figures are to be understood not numerically, but symbolically and theologically.

Ver. 10. **They cry with a great voice**, a voice expressing the intensity of their thankfulness and joy, and in their cry they attribute the glory of their salvation to Him whom they describe as **our God which sitteth on the throne**, and to **the Lamb**. To this psalm of praise which, as shown by the use of the present tense 'cry,' is sung unceasingly, a choral response is immediately given.

Vers. 11, 12. **The angels** spoken of in these verses must be the same as those at chap. v. 11, although it may be worthy of notice that the other beings in the neighbourhood of the throne are here arranged in a different order,—the 'living creatures' of chap. v. 11 there taking precedence of the 'elders,' while in the words before us the order is reversed. In the one case the throne is looked at from its outer circle to its centre, in the other from its centre to its outer circle. In the first passage also it is not said of the angels that they **fell before the throne on their faces**. This trait is probably now added because a higher manifestation of God's purposes has been reached. Here, as there, the doxology is sevenfold, but the words and the order differ. The doxology of the angels includes no mention of the Lamb, for angels had not been 'loosed from their sins in His blood' (chap. i. 5). The vision thus given is so important that an explanation is subjoined.

Ver. 13. **These which are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they?** The question is not asked by the Seer. It is addressed to him in order that his attention may be drawn to it with greater force, and **one of the elders** is the speaker. In chap. vi. the four living creatures spoke, because they represented creation, and were the instruments of vengeance. Now one of the elders speaks, because the elders represent the triumphant Church.

Vers. 14–17. The Seer does not say that he cannot answer the question, but he implies that the elder is better able to do so. He himself has no experience of the state described, and he cannot therefore speak of it as it should be spoken of. His language is peculiarly graphic, neither 'I said' of the Authorised Version, nor 'I say' of the Revised, but **I have said**, as given in the margin of the latter. The perfect tense has its appropriate power of bringing down to the present moment the feeling that is expressed. The wonder of that instant in the apostle's life is not a matter only of the past. It presents itself still as vividly to his mind as when he first uttered the

words, and asked an explanation of the glorious spectacle (comp. note on John i. 15). The word **knowest** is to be understood in a far deeper sense than that of possessing information only. It is used in the sense of the word 'know' in the Fourth Gospel, and expresses experimental knowledge (comp. note on John iv. 32 and Rev. iii. 17).

The answer to the question is next given, and its importance appears in the fact that it consists of three parts. The blessed company beheld by the apostle is first described in the words, **These are they that come** etc., and it must be at once obvious that the whole company, and not simply a portion of it, is thus alluded to. The terms of the description are peculiar and interesting, for the words 'that come' are neither equivalent to the words 'which came' of the Authorised Version, nor do they point only to the future. The idea, too, that the present tense is used because the redeemed are at that moment seen coming is not less to be rejected. They have been already represented as 'standing before the throne' (ver. 9). In these circumstances we can hardly separate the expression 'they that come' from the designation of our Lord, 'He that cometh,' in the Fourth Gospel. We have here, in short, another illustration of that identification of believers with their Lord which is so characteristic of the writings of St. John. Members of the Lord's body, they are one with Him in all His fortunes, and may be fitly described by the same terms.—**The great tribulation** is that out of which they come. It is 'the tribulation' of Matt. xxiv. 21, and is surely universal, including Jewish as well as Gentile Christians in both passages. Nor are we to understand by it merely a special tribulation at the close of the world's history. It is rather the trials experienced by the saints of God throughout the whole period of their pilgrimage, at one time greater than at another, but always great.—Secondly, they **washed their robes**, and that too, it is obviously implied, **in the blood of the Lamb**. The idea of many ancient expositors that the martyrs washed their robes in their own blood may be at once rejected. But neither can we refer the 'washing' to justification alone, and the 'making white' of the following clause to sanctification. 'Robes' are the expression of character (comp. the English word 'habits'), not simply of legal standing, and lead us to the thought of the whole cleansing efficacy of the work of Christ, to its removal of the power of sin as well as to pardon, to new life imparted as well as to old transgressions forgiven (comp. Zech. iii. 4). In the view of St. John, water alone does not exhibit the special blessing of the New Covenant (comp. 1 John v. 6). The Old Covenant has water; the New has 'blood,' and blood is life. What is here signified, therefore, is that these believers are made new creatures in Christ Jesus; they are alike justified and sanctified, when they are 'washed' in the blood of Christ.—Thirdly, they **made their robes white** in the blood of the Lamb. This is more than the mere result of the washing. It is the addition of a new feature. In the blood of the Lamb they made them not only clean but glistering, so that they shone with a dazzling brightness (comp. Heb. ix. 11–14).

Such being the persons spoken of, the place occupied by them is next described in two particulars; first, in the terms already employed in ver. 9, and secondly, as the innermost sanctuary of the temple of God, the innermost recess of the heavenly abode. Then follows a description of the blessedness of the righteous in what seems to be seven particulars having reference to the future. Why we should have the future here instead of the present, as in the former parts of the vision, may be difficult to say. Probably it is because we pass at this point to a change of thought, not now to the place of blessedness, but to that blessedness itself which shall never end.

(1) **He that sitteth**, etc. (comp. xxi. 3). God shall be their constant shelter and defence—especially shall He **spread his tabernacle over them** at the joyful feast of Tabernacles to be celebrated by all nations (Isa. iv. 5, 6; Zech. xiv. 16).—(2) **They shall hunger no more** (Isa. xlix. 10).—(3) **Neither thirst any more** (Isa. xlix. 10).—(4) **Neither shall the sun strike on them nor any heat** (Isa. xlix. 10).—(5) **The Lamb shall as a Shepherd tend them** (Ps. xxiii. 1).—(6) **He shall guide**, etc. (Isa. xlviii. 21).—(7) **God shall wipe**, etc. (Isa. xxv. 8).

Before passing from these two consolatory visions we have still to notice the manner in which they are related to each other In doing so it is important to observe, in the first place, that the second vision does not refer to Gentile, the first to Jewish, Christians only, and that the second class is not treated simply as an 'appendix' to the first. We have already seen that the 144,000 embrace the whole Israel of God without distinction of Jew or Gentile. The same remark has to be made on the 'multitude which no man can number.' In their statements as to the persons saved the two visions are identical. Nor is it difficult to see why the redeemed should be numbered in the one vision, and not in the other. In the one they are looked at as they are sealed by God, and He knoweth His own; He calleth them by their names; to His eyes they are a definite number. In the other they are seen by man, and man cannot count them; he beholds only a 'great multitude, which no man can number.' Compare the promise to Abraham, 'Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou art able to number them' (Gen. xv. 5), with God's language to His afflicted people. 'He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. . . . He counteth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names' (Ps. cxlvii. 2, 4). The difference between the two visions, then, is to be sought not in any distinction between the persons referred to, but rather in the different circumstances in which the same persons are brought before us in each. In the first we behold the Church in her conflict; in the second in her victory. In the first, even though troubled on every side, she is safe; in the second her troubles have closed for ever. In the first she is tempest-tossed but her Lord is with her, and she is assured that she shall reach the haven of rest; in the second the haven has been reached, and she shall never again be exposed to the raging of any storm. Even in her time of trial God has marked her for His own; affliction may refine but cannot vanquish her; and the day is not distant when every trace of affliction shall yield to perfect, uninterrupted, endless joy.

CHAPTER VIII. 1–6.

The opening of the Seventh Seal.

1 AND when he had[1] opened the seventh seal, there was[2] [a]silence in heaven about the space of half an [b]hour.
2 And I saw the seven angels which stood[3] before God; and to
3 them were given[4] [c]seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a [d]golden censer; and there was given unto him much [e]incense, that he should offer *it* with[5] the prayers of all saints[6] upon the golden altar which was
4 before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, *which came*[7] with the prayers of the saints, ascended[8] up before God
5 out of the angel's hand. And the angel took[9] the censer, and[10] [f]filled it with[11] fire of the altar, and cast *it* into[12] the earth: and there were[13] [g]voices, and thunderings,[14] and light-
6 nings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

[a] Cp. ch. iv. 5; Job xxix. 21, 22; Ps. lxxxv. 8; Hab. ii. 20.
[b] Lu. xxii. 53; Jo. xii. 23, 27.
[c] Ex. xix. 16; Josh. vi. 20; Judg. vii. 22.
[d] Lev. xvi. 12, 13.
[e] Ex. xxx. 7; Lu. i. 10.
[f] Ezek. x. 2.
[g] Ch. iv. 5, xi. 19; Isa. xxx. 30.

[1] *omit* had [2] followed a [3] stand [4] and there were given unto them
[5] should add it unto [6] all the saints [7] omit *which came*
[8] went [9] hath taken [10] *add* he [11] *add* the [12] upon
[13] followed [14] thunders, and voices

CONTENTS. The opening verses of this chapter look back not upon chap. vii., but upon chap vi., and they introduce the second great series of Visions, that of the Trumpets. They thus complete one series and anticipate another. Much difficulty has, indeed, been experienced by commentators in the effort to determine whether we have all the contents of the seventh Seal in the first six verses of this chapter, or whether out of it the seven Trumpets are also developed. In the latter case the seventh Seal will really extend to chap. xv. 4, or rather (for the symmetrical structure of the book will compel us to apply the same principle to the Bowls) to chap. xvi. 21. It is not impossible that it should be so, but it is at least unlikely. Again, if the seven Trumpets develop themselves out of the seventh Seal, we should expect the seven Bowls to develop themselves out of the seventh Trumpet; but at chap. xv. 5 there is no indication of this. Once more, the seventh Trumpet has 'lightnings and voices and thunders' as one of the distinguishing characteristics of its close (chap. xi. 19). The seventh Bowl at its close has the same (comp. xvi. 18–21). It is natural to think that we shall find the seventh Seal ending in the same way; and, if so, it must be at chap. viii. 5, the next verse being then simply one of transition. We conclude, therefore, that the seventh Seal does not embrace the contents of the seven Trumpets. The Trumpets are an independent series of visions; and the seventh Seal, however connected with them, stands alone, completing the series of Seals.

Ver. 1. The opening of the seals is resumed in almost exactly the same strain as before in chap. vi. When the seventh seal was opened there followed a silence in heaven. This silence is generally supposed to relate to the cessation either of the songs of praise spoken of in chap. vii., or of the trials of the Church, which is now to enjoy a blessed period of rest. Both interpretations are unsatisfactory: the first, because, having returned to the subject of chap. vi., we have now nothing to do with chap. vii., and because it is hardly possible to imagine that the Seer would represent the songs of the heavenly host as interrupted even for a moment; the second, because the silence took place 'in heaven,' and cannot represent the rest of the Church on earth. We suggest that the 'silence' alluded to refers only to the cessation of the 'lightnings and voices and thunders' of chap. iv. 5. These are the accompaniments of the Almighty's throne in that aspect of it with which St. John has especially to do (comp. chap. vi. 1). They probably did not pause while the seals were opening. Now they cease; and the meaning is that there is a pause in the judgments of God before a second and higher manifestation of them takes place.

This interpretation may find support in what appears to be the meaning of the words half an hour, words which are neither to be literally understood, nor to be regarded as expressing only a short space of time without having been suggested by any definite idea in the writer's mind. Omitting all reference to the views of others, it seems to us that three considerations may be noted; first, that the word 'hour,' though here part of a compound word, can hardly be separated from the 'hour' so often spoken of by our Lord—

'This is your hour, and the power of darkness;' 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified;' 'Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour' (Luke xxii. 53; John xii. 23, 27); secondly, that the idea embodied in the 'half' of anything is that of the thing interrupted or broken, as in three and a half the half of seven; thirdly, that St. John is frequently in the habit of marking a pause before any great step in the further development of the history which he gives is taken. We see this last trait of his mode of thought on different occasions in the Fourth Gospel, and a marked illustration of it is afforded in Rev. xx. Keeping these points in view, the silence of half an hour may well be understood to mean that the hour of judgment is interrupted or broken. In other words, judgment is not yet completed, and we must pause in order to prepare for that unfolding of it which is yet to come.

Ver. 2. **The seven angels** spoken of **stand before God** ready to execute His will. It is implied that this is their usual position, and not merely that they are there for the moment.—**And there were given unto them seven trumpets.** These trumpets are neither those of festal proclamation, nor are they, with some recent commentators, to be regarded as a mere 'manifestation of will.' They are trumpets of war and battle, like those whose sound brought down the walls of Jericho, or those whose blast struck terror into the hosts of Midian (Judg. vii. 22). This alone is sufficient to show us that in them we have an advance upon the seals. The seals only announce judgment. The trumpets indicate action, which at the same time they arouse and quicken.

Ver. 3. As we are here at a higher stage of judgment than before, a greater amount of preparation is made for it. Hence the second angel appears. Who this, called **another angel**, was we are not informed. But, when we compare chap. x. 1 (see note), we shall probably conclude that, though not actually our Lord Himself, he is a representation of Him. He is distinctly pointed to as the Mediator of the prayers of the saints, and to Him all judgment is committed. Christ's place, too, as our High Priest, is **by the altar.** Commentators have felt much difficulty in determining which of the two altars of the Tabernacle is referred to in the verse before us as 'the altar,' and whether we are to distinguish between it and that afterwards spoken of in the same verse as **the golden altar which was before the throne.** Upon the whole the probability seems to be that they are the same, the difference of expression depending upon the fact that the fuller description is given when the special purpose of the altar is more particularly alluded to. At ver. 5, where we have again the simple designation 'the altar,' it is hardly possible to think of any other than the golden altar or the altar of incense. Beside this altar then the angel appears standing with **a golden censer. Much incense** is given him that he should **add it unto the prayers of all the saints,** so that the prayers and the incense might ascend together, a memorial before God of the trials and sufferings of His people. These prayers are obviously those of the suffering Church; and they are offered, not that she may be prepared to meet the coming judgments, but that she may hasten them (comp. Luke xviii. 7, 8). It is clear that both in this verse, and throughout the passage, we are dealing not with any select company of believers, or with martyrs in the ordinary sense of that term, but with the whole Church of Christ conceived of as being in a martyr state.

Ver. 4. **The smoke of the incense,** now added to the prayers of the Church, **went up before God,** reminding the Almighty of the sufferings of His people, and of the answer for which they cried.

Ver. 5. The angel **filled the censer with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth.** For the thought of 'filling' comp. John ii. 7, xix. 29, xxi. 11. For the *Nemesis* so characteristic of St. John, observe that the sufferings which had been spoken of, endured at the hands of the 'earth,' return in judgment upon the 'earth' (comp. chap. vi. 4–8). The peculiar tense of the verb **hath taken** is in all probability employed in order to bring out the fact that the censer had never been laid aside by the angel from the moment when he first took it into his hand (comp. on chap. vii. 14). The **thunders and voices and lightnings and earthquake** which are next spoken of are the appropriate accompaniments of judgment.

Before passing from these verses, one important question connected with them ought to be noticed, from its bearing on the general character of the Apocalypse. Of what nature are the prayers referred to? They have been sometimes described as prayers for the salvation of the world, at other times as prayers for mercy to such as will receive mercy, for judgment on the impenitent and hardened. Both views are out of keeping with the context. Let us compare the fact, noticed in ver. 5, that the angel took the golden censer and filled it with fire of the altar and cast it into the earth, with the two facts mentioned in ver. 3, that the golden censer there spoken of is the one out of which the angel had just caused the smoke to go up with the prayers of all the saints before God, and that the fire is taken from the golden altar upon which these prayers had just been offered, and we shall feel that it is impossible to accept either interpretation. There is no thought of mercy for the world. The prayers are for judgment only. They are prayers that God will vindicate His own cause, and they are answered by Him who, when His people cry to Him, will arise to judgment. To a similar effect is the cry of the souls under the altar in chap. vi. 10; and, when judgments are poured out, all the hosts of heaven behold in them the brightest manifestation of God's glory (chap. xix. 1, 2; comp. chap. xi. 17, 18). Yet it would be a grievous mistake to see in passages such as these any desire for personal vengeance on the part of the righteous, any want of that compassion which longs for the salvation of the whole world. They express only that longing for the reign of perfect truth and holiness which is one of the most essential constituents of love, whether in God or man.

Ver. 6. The prayers of the suffering Church have been heard, and the answer is to be given. Hence we are told in this verse that the **seven angels prepared themselves to sound.** The words are, strictly speaking, a part neither of the seventh seal nor of the first trumpet. They mark a transition point, preparatory to the latter.

CHAPTER VIII. 7–13.

The First Four Trumpets.

7 THE[1] first angel[2] sounded, and there followed[3] [a]hail and fire mingled with[4] [b]blood, and they were[5] cast upon the earth:[6] and the third part of trees[7] was [c]burnt up, and all
8 green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great [d]mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the [e]third part of the sea became [f]blood;
9 and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and[8] had life, died; and the third part of the [g]ships were[9] destroyed.
10 And the third angel sounded, and there [h]fell a great star from heaven,[10] burning as it were[11] a lamp,[12] and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;[13]
11 and the name of the star is called [i]Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of
12 the waters, because they were made [k]bitter. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so[14] as[15] the third part of them was[16] [l]darkened, and the day shone not[17] for a[18] third part of it, and the night likewise.[19]
13 And I beheld,[20] and heard an [m]angel[21] flying through the midst of heaven,[22] saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth[23] by reason of the other[24] voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which[25] are yet[26] to sound!

[a] Ex. ix. 23.
[b] Joel ii. 30.
[c] Joel i. 19.
[d] Jer. li. 25; Mat. xxi. 21.
[e] Ezek. v. 12.
[f] Ex. vii. 19.
[g] Ps. civ. 26; Isa. ii. 16.
[h] Isa. xiv. 12.
[i] Jer. ix. 15.
[k] Ex. xv. 23; 2 Kings ii. 19; Ezek. xlvii. 9.
[l] Ex. x. 21; Isa. xiii. 10; Amos viii. 9.
[m] Deut. xxviii. 49; Mat. xxiv. 28.

[1] And the [2] *omit* angel [3] came [4] in [5] and it was
[6] *add* and the third part of the earth was burnt up [7] the trees
[8] even they that [9] was [10] and there fell out of heaven a great star
[11] *omit* it were [12] torch [13] the waters [14] *omit* so [15] that
[16] should be [17] should not shine [18] the [19] in like manner
[20] saw [21] one eagle [22] flying in mid-heaven
[23] to them that dwell on the earth [24] remaining [25] who [26] aoout

CONTENTS. The first four Trumpets are evidently separated from the three which follow them, both by the words of ver. 13 and by the fact that they refer to things of earth, while in the latter we are brought into contact with the spiritual world. A transition of a similar kind met us at the opening of the fifth Seal in chap. vi. 9, and the correspondence, in a book constructed upon so symmetrical a plan as the Apocalypse, is sufficient to show us that the transition is in both cases designed.

Ver. 7. **And the first sounded, and there came hail and fire mingled in blood, and it was cast upon the earth.** The language used both in this and the following judgments takes us back to the Old Testament, and more particularly to the plagues of Egypt. Pharaoh, who was visited by these plagues, was always to Israel the symbol of the cruel and oppressive treatment by the world of the children of God; while the judgments of the Almighty upon Egypt, vindicating His own glory and effecting the deliverance of His people, became types of the manner in which the same great ends shall be effected in every age of the Church's history. But the plagues of Egypt are not followed in their order, nor are they alone resorted to for the imagery of these visions. All the figures of judgment used in the Old Testament are familiar to the mind of the Apocalyptic Seer, and he uses them in the manner which he thinks best adapted to his plan. That of this verse is founded on Ex. ix. 23–25, where we are told that 'the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous; . . . and the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that

was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.' In some respects the judgment of the first trumpet seems less terrible than that on Egypt. In other respects the terrors of the latter are increased. More particularly is this the case with the mention of 'blood,' for the fire and hail are not mingled 'with' blood. They are mingled 'in' blood; that is, the blood is what we see; but beneath its surface are hailstones and coals of fire. It seems unwise to attempt to connect particular judgments, such as wars or pestilences or the incursions of barbarians or the demolition of cities, with the special things mentioned as objects of terror either in this or the following visions. By no enumeration could the Seer have given symbolical expression to all the variety of ways in which the world has suffered because it has refused the revelation of Divine truth offered it in Christ Jesus, and has persecuted those by whom, at one time in word, at another in life, that truth has been received and faithfully proclaimed. Any selection from these would, therefore, have been arbitrary, or might even have misled us as to the relative importance of different Divine judgments. It is more natural to think that these objects of terror simply denote judgment in general, and that they are to be interpreted neither of classes of judgments nor of individuals of a class.—The effect of the judgments spoken of is, that **the third part of the earth**, that is, of the surface of the earth, and **the third part of the trees**, and **all green grass**, were **burnt up**.

Again, as at chap. vii. 1 (see note), we are not to interpret these words in any specially metaphorical sense. The figure, as belonging to the third part of the earth, would indeed prove quite incongruous if we did, for the trees would necessarily perish when that portion of its surface was destroyed, and the statement of the next clause, that only a third part of the trees was burnt up, would be incorrect. Neither does it seem as if any particular meaning were intended by the 'third part' mentioned. It was necessary to fix upon some fractional part in order to leave room for the heavier judgments that are yet to come, and the 'third' may have been selected for no more important reason than that the numeral three plays so large a part in the general structure of the Apocalypse, or that the instruments of judgment mentioned immediately before had been three in number.

Vers. 8, 9. These two verses contain the second trumpet, at the sounding of which what resembled a great mountain, **as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea**. There is nothing in this part of the description to remind us of the plagues of Egypt, but in Jer. li. 25 we read of a 'burnt mountain.' It may be doubted, however, whether there is any reference to this, and the image may be only intended to convey to us the idea of a judgment frightful to behold, and terrible in its effects. That we are not to think of any particular object is evident from the want of all direct correspondence between the instrument of judgment and its effects. The casting of a burning mountain into the sea has no tendency to turn its waters into blood.—In the description of the effect produced we are reminded of the first plague of Egypt (Ex. vii. 20, 21). As before, and no doubt for the same reason, it is a **third part of the sea**, and of **the creatures which were in the sea** and of **the ships**, that suffers. The first becomes blood, the second die, the third are destroyed. The ships appear to be thought of apart from their crews.

This trumpet is distinguished from the first by its containing judgments on the sea instead of the land, but both sea and land can only be regarded as together making up the surface of the earth. They are not separately symbolical, the one of the mass of the Gentile nations, the other of the Jews.

Vers. 10, 11. These verses record the sounding of the third trumpet, when **there fell out of heaven a great star burning as a torch**. The star fell upon the **third part** of the waters of the earth exclusive of the sea, which had been already visited under the second trumpet. These waters are naturally divided into two portions, **rivers** and **fountains**. The one-third part, though not expressly mentioned, is to be understood in connection with the latter as well as with the former, for it appears from ver. 11 that no more than one-third of all waters was hurt. The 'hurt' consists in communicating to the waters the poisonously bitter qualities of the star which, in order to express its extreme bitterness, is called Wormwood; while the bitter waters themselves remind us of the waters of Marah (Ex. xv. 23), and of those waters in the vision of Ezekiel which were only made whole by means of the living stream beheld by the prophet as it issued from the temple (Ezek. xlvii. 9). They represent the bitterness of that water with which, instead of the water of life, the world seeks to quench the thirst of its votaries. Under the third trumpet we first meet with **men**. Under the first we had nothing but inanimate nature; under the second nature was associated with creatures that had life; now we read of the death of many *men*. As the judgments of God are sent forth one after another they deepen in intensity.

Ver. 12. In this verse we have the contents of the fourth trumpet, which touches **the sun**, **the moon**, and **the stars**. Yet it must not be supposed that, because these heavenly bodies are now introduced, we are taken beyond the condition of men in the present world. Sun, moon, and stars are thought of only in their relation to earth and its life and comfort, so that when they are affected it also suffers. The idea of the judgment rests upon the Egyptian plague of darkness. Any attempt to connect particular objects upon earth with the heavenly bodies mentioned in the judgment is vain. As we have already seen under the previous trumpets, the objects judged are simply parts of the world in which men dwell, and it may be noticed that they are substantially taken up and gathered together as a whole when, in chap. xiv. 7, the Almighty is described as He 'that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.' It may be further worth while to remark that the sun and moon and stars are by no means so seriously affected here as they were under the sixth seal (chap. vi. 12, 13). There 'the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth.' Now only a third part of their light is taken away. The whole series of the trumpets is more intense in judgment than that of the seals, but not to such a degree that the judgment of the fourth trumpet

may not be lighter than that of the sixth seal. At the same time we are not to infer that the first four trumpets necessarily precede the sixth seal, except in thought.

Ver. 13. The first four trumpets are over, and we might have expected to pass, as in the case of the seals, directly and without interruption, to the fifth. But we are dealing with a higher potency of judgment than that which met us under the seals; and at this point therefore, when a transition is to be made from the earthly to the spiritual world, our attention is specially called to the judgments that are to follow. **And I saw, and I heard one eagle flying in mid-heaven.** The reading of the Authorised Version 'angel' instead of 'eagle' is undoubtedly a mistake of copyists, and the word 'one' ought to be given effect to, as at chaps. ix. 13 and xix. 17. Nor can there be much hesitation in determining why the eagle is thus fixed on as the bird of all others to proclaim woe. Most commentators indeed allow without hesitation that here at least, as so frequently in the Old Testament, the eagle is thought of as the bird of rapine and prey (Deut. xxviii. 49; Jer. xlviii. 40, xlix. 22; Ezek. xvii. 3; Hos. viii. 1; Hab. i. 8; Matt. xxiv. 28; comp. also note on Rev. iv. 7). That this eagle flew in 'mid-heaven' is easily explained. It was there that he could best be seen, and thence that his voice could most easily be heard by men.—**His cry is Woe, woe, woe to them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound.** By them 'that dwell on the earth' are to be understood the ungodly alone (comp. on chap. iii. 10). The solemn warning has been given, and all is ready for the sounding of the fifth trumpet.

CHAPTER IX. 1–12.

The Fifth Trumpet.

1 AND the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a [a] star [b] fall [1] from [2]
heaven unto [3] the earth: and to him was given [4] the
2 [c] key of the bottomless [5] pit. [6] And he opened the bottomless [5]
pit; [7] and there arose [8] a smoke out of the pit, [8] as the smoke of
a great furnace; and the sun and the air were [d] darkened by
3 reason of the smoke of the pit. [8] And there came out of the
smoke locusts upon [9] the earth: and unto them was given
4 power, as the [e] scorpions of the earth have power. And it was
commanded [10] them that they should not hurt the grass of the
earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only
those [11] men which [12] have not the [f] seal of God in [13] their
5 foreheads. And to them it was given [14] that they should [g] not
kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and
their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he [15]
6 striketh a man. And in those days shall men [h] seek death,
and shall not [16] find it; and [17] shall desire to die, and death
7 shall flee [18] from them. And the shapes of the locusts *were* like
unto [i] horses prepared unto battle; [19] and on their heads *were*
as it were crowns like [20] gold, and their faces *were* as the [21] faces
8 of men. And they had hair as the [21] hair of women, and their
9 [k] teeth were as *the* [21] *teeth* of lions. And they had breastplates,
as it were breastplates of iron; and the [l] sound of their wings
was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. [22]

[a] Isa. xiv. 12. [b] Isa. xiv. 12; Lu. x. 18. [c] Ch. xx. 1. [d] Ex. x. 14, 15; Joel ii. 1, 2. [e] Deut. viii. 15; Ezek. ii. 6; Lu. x. 19. [f] Ch. vii. 3. [g] Job ii. 6. [h] Job iii. 21; Jer. viii. 3. [i] Joel ii. 4–10. [k] Joel i. 6. [l] Joel ii. 5.

[1] *omit* fall [2] out of [3] fallen into [4] and there was given to him
[5] *omit* bottomless [6] well of the abyss [7] went up
[8] well [9] And there came forth locusts out of the smoke into
[10] said unto [11] such [12] as [13] on [14] And it was given them
[15] it [16] in no wise [17] *add* they [18] fleeth
[19] for war [20] *add* unto [21] *omit* the [22] rushing to war

10 And they had [23] tails like unto scorpions, and there were [24] stings in their tails: [25] and [26] their power *was* [27] to hurt men five
11 months. And they had a [m] king over them, [28] *which is* [29] the angel of the bottomless [30] pit, [31] whose [32] name in the Hebrew tongue [33] *is* [n] Abaddon, but [34] in the Greek tongue hath *his*
12 name [35] Apollyon. One [36] woe is past; *and*, [37] behold, there come [o] two woes more [38] hereafter.

[m] Prov. xxx. 27.

[n] Ps. lxxxviii. 12; Prov. xv. 11.

[o] Ver. 13, ch. xi. 14.

[23] have
[24] *omit* there were
[25] *omit* in their tails
[26] *add* in their tails is
[27] omit *was*
[28] They have over them as king
[29] omit *which is*
[30] *omit* bottomless
[31] abyss
[32] his
[33] in Hebrew
[34] and
[35] he hath the name
[36] The one
[37] omit *and*
[38] yet two woes

CONTENTS. The verses before us contain an account of the fifth trumpet.

Ver. 1. What the Seer beheld was not a star 'fall' out of heaven, but a star fallen (as in the Authorised Version). The difference is important, for we are thus led to think not of any punishment which befell the star, but of its moral and religious condition at the time when it was permitted to inflict the plague to be immediately described. The mention of a 'star' leads to the thought of a potentate or power; and, as what is said of it can hardly be separated from the statement of chap. xii. 7-9, there is little doubt that the star represents Satan,—there his expulsion from heaven, here his condition after he is expelled. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that it is everywhere the manner of St. John to present evil as the direct counterpart of good. Christ is the 'Morning Star' (chap. xxii. 16); Satan is a 'star fallen.' The words used suggest also the important consideration that, in the view of the apostle, Satan was not originally evil. He is a spirit fallen 'out of heaven,' not merely 'from heaven,' as if to describe the greatness of his fall, but 'out of heaven,' that abode of purity and bliss to which he had formerly belonged. Once he was like other happy spirits there: he is now fallen **into the earth**, the abode of sin and trouble.

That which was given him **was the key of the well of the abyss.** The word 'pit' in both the Authorised and Revised Versions fails to convey the proper meaning of the original. It is a 'well' that is spoken of: and, though the expression may seem strange, it is proper to retain it, both because what men lock is not a pit but the long shaft of a well, which to this day in the East is often covered at the mouth and locked, and because we seem to have here one of the remarkable contrasts so characteristic of St. John,—that between a 'fountain' and a 'well.' Truth emanates from a fountain. Jesus Himself is the true 'fountain of Jacob' (John iv. 6, 14). Only to the eye which does not yet see is that fountain a 'well' (John iv. 12).—The shaft of the well goes down into the 'abyss,' the abode of Satan (chaps. xi. 7, xvii. 8, xx. 1, 3).

Ver. 2. No sooner was the well opened than **there went up a smoke out of the well as the smoke of a great furnace.** The smoke must be thought of as so thick and black that the sun was shrouded from view and the whole air darkened. It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that darkness is the note of Satan's kingdom as light is of Christ's (comp. Eph. vi. 12, where Satan and his angels are called 'the world-rulers of this darkness').

Ver. 3. **Out of the smoke**, we are next told, **there came forth locusts into the earth.** We need not ask whether these locusts came out of the well, or only out of the smoke after it reached the surface of the earth. The latter is all that the Seer beholds, but it cannot be doubted that he looks upon the plague as demoniacal in its origin. The locusts are compared with locusts of the earth, and they have **given unto them** the frightful power of destruction belonging to the latter. The idea of the plague is no doubt taken in the first instance from the Egyptian plague of the same kind (Ex. x. 14, 15); but a similar image of terrible and irresistible destruction is frequently employed by the prophets (Ps. cv. 34; Jer. xlvi. 23; and especially Joel ii. 1, 2).

Ver. 4. In one respect, indeed, there is a remarkable distinction between the ravages of the locusts mentioned here and those of the common locusts of the earth. Grass and trees and all green things are what the last lay desolate, but such things these locusts are forbidden to touch. It was said unto them that they should not hurt **the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree**; and the prohibition may be so given in order to bring out, more strongly than would otherwise be done, the singleness with which their rage is directed against *men*, as well as the degree to which that rage is increased by want of their ordinary food. Not all men, however, but only **such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads**, are to be smitten by the plague; and the inference, in its bearing on the interpretation of the sealing in chap. vii., ought not to pass unnoticed. If we confine the sealing to the tribes of Israel, it will be impossible to extend the locust plague beyond that limit; yet no one will contend for such a view.

Ver. 5. While 'men' are thus the object of the locust plague, its violence is even as to them restrained. **And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months.** The killing of men is reserved for a still higher stage of judgment, under the sixth trumpet. In the meantime torment alone is to be inflicted, but that of a kind most painful and acute, **as the torment of a scorpion when it striketh a man.** The locust is generally said to have no sting (see below). Here, therefore, in order to bring out the terror of the

plague, it has the sting of the scorpion assigned to it (comp. Deut. viii. 15; Ezek. ii. 6).—The time during which the torment is to be inflicted is 'five months,' and the explanation most commonly accepted is, that five months are the period of the year during which locusts commit their ravages. The explanation is improbable, because—(1) There is no sufficient proof that five months is really the duration of a locust-plague. Such a plague is rather short and swift; (2) It is out of keeping with the style of the Apocalypse to give literal periods of time; (3) On the supposition that five months are the ordinary duration of a locust-plague, the ravages here referred to are committed during the whole time to which the plague naturally belongs; whereas the period of five months is named for the sake of showing that the plague is checked. We must, therefore, apply the same principle of interpretation as in chap. viii. 1. Five is the half of ten: it denotes a broken, imperfect, limited, shortened time. The type of the period spoken of may perhaps be found in the Deluge, which lasted for five months.

Ver. 6. So terrible is the plague that men shall eagerly, but in vain, desire to die—a point reached under the *sixth* seal, but now under the *fifth* trumpet,—the usual climax of the Apocalypse. Before passing on it may be well to notice the remarkable double reference to the book of Job in these verses. There, as here in ver. 5, Satan was restrained when the patriarch was delivered into his hands (Job ii. 6). There, as here, the smitten one longed to die (Job iii. 11, 20, 21). This double reference must be considered as conclusive upon the point that Job is in the Apostle's eye; and, if so, nothing more is needed to convince us that the locust-plague is demoniacal not earthly in its origin.

Vers. 7–11. The locusts are now more particularly described, and the description consists of three parts; the first general, the second special, the third the locust king.

(1) The general description. Their shapes are like **horses prepared for war.** The same comparison is found in Joel ii. 4; and the likeness of the locust to a horse is so marked that the insect is named in German *Heupferd*, and in Italian *Cavaletta* (Cheval).

(2) The special description in seven particulars.—1. **On their heads were, as it were, crowns like unto gold,**—not crowns but 'as' crowns, so that any yellow brilliancy about the head of the insect is a sufficient foundation for the figure. The crowns are emblems of victory (chap. vi. 2), and the locusts are presented as a conquering host.—2. **Their faces were as faces of men,**—again not actually human faces, but faces suggesting the likeness, which the face of the locust is said to do. It is a question whether the word 'men' is to be understood in the general sense of human beings, or (in contrast with women) of the male sex only. Chap. iv. 7 seems to determine in favour of the latter. Boldness and strength, perhaps even severity and fierceness, are suggested by the figure.—3. **And they had hair as hair of women.** There is said to be an Arabic proverb comparing the antennæ of locusts to the hair of girls. If so, we have a sufficient foundation for this feature of the comparison. What the idea may be it is not easy to say. But softness and effeminacy, with their attendant licentiousness, are probably the point in view.—4. **And their teeth were as teeth of lions.** This feature, whether drawn from actual observation of the insect or not, is sufficiently accounted for by Joel i. 6.—5. **And they had breastplates as it were breastplates of iron,**—a feature taken from the thought of the plate which forms the thorax of the locust, and which resembles the plates of a horse clad in ancient armour when prepared for war.—6. **And the sound of their wings,** etc. It is said that locusts in their flight make a fearful noise (Smith's *Dict. of Bible*, ii. 132).—7. **And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months.** There is general agreement that, in this feature at least, comparison with the insect as it exists in nature fails; although, if the insect be the *Acridium lineola*, and if the plate in Smith's *Bible Dict.* (vol. ii. p. 129) is to be trusted, there is a distinct sting in the tail. In such a case the sting now spoken of is only magnified, and declared to be like a scorpion, in order to bring out its destructive power.

(3) Their king. Unlike the insect-locusts of whom it is expressly noted in Prov. xxx. 27 that 'they have no king,' these locusts have a king, the head of their kingdom (Matt. xii. 26). **They have over them as king the angel of the abyss.** This 'angel' is the expression of the abyss, in whom all its evil influences are concentrated. In other words he is Satan. It is no serious objection to this that we have found the 'star' to be Satan (ver. 1). We are not told that the king spoken of issued out of the abyss, and we may quite easily think of the locusts either as his hosts or as those of the 'star.'—**The name of the king is in Hebrew Abaddon.** The word is used for the place of perdition in Job xxvi. 6, xxviii. 22, Ps. lxxxviii. 12, Prov. xv. 11, but its first meaning seems to be perdition itself. Here, however, the idea of perdition is personified; and hence the mention of **Apollyon,** where the Greek term for perdition is so changed as to make it also a personification of the abstract idea. The character of the king and of his host appears in the name borne by the former. Their aim is not to save, but to destroy.

Before passing from this vision we have still to ask more particularly as to its meaning. All application to the host of the Mahomedans may be at once dismissed. The woe falls upon the whole world, not merely upon a part of it, and it is not permitted to affect the redeemed Church. At the same time it cannot find its fulfilment in mere war, or in the calamities which war brings. The woe is obviously spiritual. It issues from the abyss of hell; the smoke of it darkens the air; the torment which accompanies it is not one that brings death but that makes the soul weary of life. These circumstances point to a great outburst of spiritual evil which shall aggravate the sorrows of the world, make it learn how bitter is the bondage of Satan, and teach it to feel, even in the midst of enjoyment, that it were better to die than to live.

Ver. 12. We are now at a higher stage of judgment than in the seals. More solemnity therefore befits the occasion. At the close of the fifth seal we passed directly to the sixth: not so now. The Seer interposes with the warning, **The one woe is passed; behold, there come yet two woes hereafter.**

CHAPTER IX. 13-21.

The Sixth Trumpet.

13 AND the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a [1] voice from [2]
the four [3] horns [a] of the golden altar which is before God, [a] Ex. xxx. 2-10.
14 saying to the sixth angel which had [4] the trumpet, Loose the
four angels which are bound in [5] the great river [b] Euphrates. [b] Isa. viii. 6-8; Jer. xlvi. 2, 6.
15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an [6]
hour, and a [7] day, and a [7] month, and a [7] year, for to slay [8] the
16 third part of men. And the number of the army [9] of the
horsemen *were* [10] two hundred thousand thousand: [11] and [12] I
17 heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the
vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates [13] of fire,
and of jacinth, [14] and [15] brimstone: and the heads of the horses
were as the heads of [c] lions; and out of their mouths issued [16] [c] Isa. v. 28, 29.
18 fire and smoke and [d] brimstone. By these three [17] was the [d] Gen. xix. 24; Ezek. xxxviii. 22.
third part of [e] men killed, by the fire, and by [18] the smoke, and [e] Ch. viii. 13.
19 by [18] the brimstone, which issued [16] out of their mouths. For
their power [19] is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their
tails *were* [20] like unto serpents, and [21] had [22] heads, and with
20 them they do hurt. And the rest of the [23] men which were not
killed by [24] these plagues yet [25] repented not [f] of the works of [f] 2 Chron. xxviii. 23.
their hands, that they should not worship [g] devils, [26] and idols [27] [g] 1 Cor. x. 20
of gold, and [28] silver, and [28] brass, and [28] stone, and of wood:
21 which neither can [29] see, nor hear, nor [h] walk: neither repented [h] Ps. cxv. 4-7.
they [30] of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their
fornication, nor of their thefts.

[1] one [2] out of [3] *omit* four [4] hath [5] at
[6] unto the [7] *omit* a [8] kill [9] armies [10] was
[11] twice ten thousand times ten thousand [12] *omit* and [13] *add* as
[14] hyacinth stone [15] *add* of [16] cometh forth [17] *add* plagues
[18] *omit* by [19] For the power of the horses [20] are [21] *omit* and
[22] having [23] *omit* the [24] in [25] *omit* yet [26] the demons
[27] the idols [28] *add* of [29] can neither [30] and they repented not

CONTENTS. The verses before us contain an account of the sixth trumpet.

Vers. 13, 14. When the trumpet sounded, the Seer **heard one voice out of the horns of the golden altar which is before God.** This 'golden altar' is the altar of incense already mentioned in chap. viii. 3 as that the incense of which mingled with the prayers of the oppressed saints. We cannot doubt, therefore, that the plague to be described is presented to us as an answer to these prayers. Not, indeed, we again repeat, that the prayers were for vengeance on the oppressor. They were prayers that God would vindicate His own cause, and the mode in which He does so is by judgment on His adversaries. The voice issues 'out of the horns' of the altar, that is, out of the horn-shaped projections at its four corners. These horns expressed the idea of the altar in its greatest potency, and they are fitly referred to here when the power of the prayers which had ascended from the altar is to appear in the answer sent. It is probably because they were four in number that the voice is spoken of as 'one.'

The voice thus heard cried to the angel that had the sixth trumpet, **Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates.** We have already seen that in the Apocalypse the 'angel' of anything is the thing itself in activity, in the performance of the service due from it to the Almighty. The angel of the Euphrates is the Euphrates in activity, in the fulfilment of its mission. It is true that 'four' angels are here

mentioned; but this arises from the fact that four is the number of the world, the whole of which is to be affected by the plague. The name of the river is used symbolically, and the thoughts upon which the symbol rests may be traced without difficulty. The Euphrates was the boundary line of Israel on the North-East. When the covenant was first made with Abram, the promise of the Lord to the patriarch was, 'Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates' (Gen. xv. 18). This promise was subsequently repeated (Deut. i. 7; Josh. i. 4), and in the days of David and Solomon it appears to have been fulfilled (2 Sam. viii. 3–8; 1 Kings iv. 21; 2 Chron. ix. 26). The Euphrates thus formed the natural defence of God's chosen people against the terrible armies of Assyria on the other side. But for the same reason it became also, especially when swollen by those floods to which it is periodically subject, a fit emblem of the judgments inflicted by the Almighty upon Israel by means of Assyria and Babylon. Because Israel at such times 'refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly,' the great river was brought up as it were in flood to overflow with a deep stream the whole land of Immanuel (Isa. viii. 5-8). To the prophets the Euphrates thus became the symbol of all that was most disastrous in the judgments of the Almighty, and in this sense, therefore, we are here to understand the mention made of it. With the literal river we have no more to do than in so far as it supplies the foundation of the figure. In its essential meaning it has no closer connection with the East than with the West or North or South. The plague may issue from any of these quarters as well as that supposed to be specially referred to. It is interesting to notice the *progress* from the fifth trumpet plague to that before us. In Judg. vi. 5 the Midianite invaders of Palestine are compared to locusts, 'they came as locusts' (not 'grasshoppers,' as in A. V.) 'for multitude,' and they 'left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass' (ver. 4), but they left the people in the land. Now we have reached a further stage in the procession of God's judgments. We are at the cruel and murderous invasions of Assyria and Babylon, when not only sustenance was destroyed but men were killed (Lam. ii. 21).

Ver. 15. A new circumstance connected with the four angels is added in this verse. They had not only been bound: they had been kept ready for an appointed moment. **They had been prepared unto the hour and day and month and year.** The translation of these last words in the Authorised Version conveys an altogether false idea of their meaning, suggesting as it does that we are to put together the four periods mentioned, and to regard the sum as indicating the length of time during which either the preparation had been going on, or the plague was to continue. It is to be observed, however, that the words 'unto' and 'the' are not repeated before 'day and month and year.' Add to this the fact, already illustrated in the writings of St. John (chap. v. 12; John xiv. 6), that when we have a series of nouns grouped together in this way the emphasis lies upon the first, the others only filling up the thought, and we shall be satisfied that we are not to combine into one these portions of time. The meaning is that the angels are prepared 'unto the hour' appointed by God, and that this hour shall fall in its appointed day and month and year.—The commission given to the angels is **to kill the third part of men.** The point chiefly to be noticed is the climax from a one-fourth part under the seals to a one-third part here. In the climax marking the separate members of the trumpets the progress is from the 'tormenting' in the fifth trumpet to the 'killing' in the sixth.

Vers. 16, 17. A further part of the vision is unfolded, in which we are introduced to **horsemen,** as if we were already familiar with them, although nothing had been said of them before. The number of the horsemen was so great that they could not be counted: St. John only **heard the number of them.** A fuller description both of the horses and of their riders follows. The latter, not the former, had **breastplates of fire, and of hyacinth stone, and of brimstone.** The hyacinth stone is of a dull dark-blue colour resembling that produced by flaming brimstone; and thus the colours of the breastplates are those of the things that in the next words issue out of the mouths of the horses. The breastplates also are more than mere weapons of defence. With the brimstone blueness of their colour they inspire the beholder with terror. It is possible that the colours are only the reflexion, on the breastplates of the riders, of the 'fire and smoke and brimstone' that come forth from the horses' mouths. This idea is in keeping with the general strain of the passage, which seems to attach all the terror to the horses and to keep the horsemen in the background; but there is no direct evidence in its support, and it is unnecessary to resort to it.—Having spoken of the riders the description turns to the horses. To the Jew the horse, even considered by itself, was an object of terror, not of admiration. It was connected only with war, a living and swift weapon of destruction. As, however, the locusts of the fifth trumpet were more terrible than the locusts of the earth, so the horses of the sixth have their terror enhanced by the addition of new features not found in the horses of this world. Their heads were **as the heads of lions** (comp. on chap. iv. 7).—**And out of their mouths cometh forth fire and smoke and brimstone;** that is, all the three elements of woe issue from the mouth of each horse of the whole host,—a frightful substitute for foam.

Ver. 18. Before the description of the horses is continued, the effect of the three plagues that issue from their mouths is noticed. **By these three plagues was the third part of men killed,**—the third part, that is, of men over the whole earth, and whatever the division of the human race to which they belonged.

Ver. 19. The description of the horses is resumed, for the purpose of bringing out another terrible feature of their destructive power. That power is also **in their tails,** for **their tails are like unto serpents, having heads, and with them they do hurt.** Three characteristics of the tails are specially mentioned; first, they are 'like unto serpents,' long, smooth, subtle, clasping their victim in an embrace from which he cannot escape; secondly, they 'have heads' at the extremity farthest from the body; where the power of an ordinary tail ceases these tails receive increased intensity of power, the glittering eye, the poison fang; thirdly, with them, that is, with the heads, they 'do hurt.' The tail of a horse is for

its own protection: these tails devastate. Yet they are not so fatal as the mouths. The former 'hurt,' the latter 'kill.'

Vers. 20, 21. The vision is over, but the guilt of the world which was now under judgment has to be set forth with greater fulness, in order that we may better understand the evil of sin and the justness of the judgments that overtake it. **And the rest of men which were not killed in these plagues repented not.** 'Men' here are obviously the ungodly, the same as those of ver. 4, or as those spoken of in chap. viii. 13, in the words 'they that dwell on the earth.' **By the works of their hands** it is generally agreed that we are to understand not their course of life but the idols mentioned immediately afterwards. As a natural consequence of not repenting of their idol-worship these men also **repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.** Four sins are mentioned, implying universality, and leading our thoughts to both Jew and Gentile. Nor does even the mention of 'idols' entitle us to confine the obstinate hardness of heart spoken of to the heathen. Idolatry is chargeable against all the enemies of God, whether Jew or Gentile (comp. 1 John v. 21). Again we see that the 'sealed,' upon whom this plague certainly does not fall, must belong to both these divisions of mankind.

We may here pause for a moment to make one or two general remarks upon the sixth trumpet. In general characteristics it greatly resembles the fifth, but the climax of the Apocalypse may be easily marked in the progress from the latter to the former. Not only are the horses of the sixth trumpet more powerful than the locusts of the fifth, but the terribleness of the one is much greater than that of the other. To quote the words of an old commentator (Bishop Forbes of Aberdeen), 'the horses are said to have heads of lions to denote open rage and professed cruelty, whereas the locusts covered their lions' teeth with faces of men and hair of women.' Their destructive energy too is more fatal, for the power of the locusts 'to hurt' (ver. 10) becomes in them a 'power to kill.' In other respects no distinction need be drawn between the two trumpets. Special forms of judgment visiting the earth at different periods of its history can hardly with propriety be sought in them. The judgments which they represent are peculiar to no people or age. They are rather those judgments of a general kind which always have followed, and always will follow, sin. These spring in every form from the same causes, and are designed to promote the same ends. The misery with which earth is filled, whether from war or pestilence or famine, whether showing itself in poverty or crime or death, is to be traced to one and the same root,—that evil of the human heart which leads men to reject the revelation of the love of Him who willeth not that any of His creatures should perish, who would stanch all their wounds and heal all their sorrows. Upon this we are to fix our thoughts, not only under the last two, but under all the trumpets, noting only further, as we do so, that the longer mercy is despised the greater is the judgment which follows, and that the later messengers of Divine wrath are more dreadful than the earlier.

CHAPTER X. 1–11.

First Consolatory Vision.

1 AND I saw another mighty[1] angel [a]come[2] down from[3] [b]heaven, clothed with a [c]cloud: and a[4] rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were[5] the sun, and his
2 feet as pillars of fire: and he had in his hand a [d]little book[6] open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his* left *foot*[7]
3 on[8] the earth, and cried[9] with a loud[10] voice, as *when*[11] a [e]lion roareth: and when he had[12] cried, seven[13] thunders uttered
4 their voices. And when the seven thunders had[13] uttered their voices, I was about to [f]write: and I heard a voice from[14] heaven saying unto me,[15] [g]Seal up those[16] things which the
5 seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw stand[17] upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up
6 his hand[16] to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and

[a] Isa. xxxi. 4.
[b] Jo. vi. 41.
[c] Ex. xix. 9.
[d] Ezek. ii. 9, 10.
[e] Ch. v. 5; Hos. xi. 10.
[f] Ch. i. 11.
[g] Dan. xii. 4, 9.

[1] strong
[2] coming
[3] out of
[4] the
[5] *omit* it were
[6] book-roll
[7] omit *foot*
[8] upon
[9] and he cried
[10] great
[11] omit *when*
[12] *omit* had
[13] the seven
[14] out of
[15] *omit* unto me
[16] the
[17] standing
[18] right hand

the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which [19] are therein, that there should [20] be [k] time [21] no
7 longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin [22] to sound, the [l] mystery of God should be [k] finished,[23] as [24] he hath [25] declared to his servants the pro-
8 phets. And the voice which I heard from [26] heaven spake unto me again,[27] and said,[28] Go *and* [29] take the little [30] book [31] which [32] is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon
9 the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and [33] said [34] unto him, Give me the little book.[35] And he said [36] unto me, Take *it*, and [l] eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter,
10 but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as [m] honey. And I took the little book [37] out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as [38] I had
11 eaten it, my belly was [39] bitter. And he said [40] unto me, Thou must prophesy again before [n] many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

[k] Hab. ii. 3; Mat. xxiv. 22; Rom. ix. 28.
[l] Eph. iii. 9.
[k] Jo. xix. 30.
[l] Ezek. iii. 1.
[m] Ps. xix. 9, 10; Jer. xv. 16.
[n] Acts ix. 15.

[19] that [20] shall [21] delay [22] when he is about
[23] then is finished the mystery of God [24] according to the good tidings which
[25] *omit* hath [26] out of [27] I heard it again speaking with me
[28] saying [29] omit *and* [30] *omit* little [31] book-roll
[32] that [33] *omit* and [34] saying
[35] that he should give me the little book-roll [36] saith
[37] book-roll [38] and when [39] *add* made [40] And they say

CONTENTS. It can hardly be doubted that the whole of chap. x. and the first part of chap. xi. (vers. 1–13) are episodical, after the same manner and with the same purpose as chap. vii. The sixth Trumpet, or the second Woe, seems obviously to close at chap. ix. 21; the two visions contained in the passage upon which we enter are of a tone entirely distinct from that of a Woe; and the seventh Trumpet only begins at chap. xi. 15. These considerations are sufficient to determine the character of the visions before us. It has indeed been urged that the words of chap. xi. 14 are conclusive against this view, and that they indicate the continuation of the second Woe to that point. The insertion of these words, however, in the place where we find them may be explained without our so entirely mistaking the nature of the passage between chaps. x. 1 and xi. 13 as to suppose that it forms the continuation of a Woe. The word 'quickly' is the emphatic word in chap. xi. 14, denoting as it does that climax in judgment which is to be made known under the seventh Trumpet. But to have introduced it at chap. ix. 21 would have led to the impression that the third Woe was immediately to follow. It was necessary therefore to postpone the statement that the second Woe was past and the third at hand, until the moment when the latter was to be introduced. Thus the two consolatory visions of chaps. x. 1–xi. 13 are interposed between the end of the second Woe and the declaration that the third is about to begin.

Ver. 1. **A strong angel is seen coming down out of heaven** who is said to be 'another.' Already, at chap. v. 2, we have met with a 'strong angel' who is also introduced in connection with the book-roll spoken of in that chapter. It is reasonable to think, therefore, that this mention of 'another' has reference to that one, and not to the 'many' angels of whom we have elsewhere read. What we are to think of this angel will be best considered after we have noticed the things said concerning him. (1) He comes 'out of heaven,' where is the throne of God. (2) He is **clothed with a cloud.** The expression 'a cloud,' or 'the cloud,' or 'clouds,' is met with seven times in the Apocalypse, and in five of these it is distinctly connected with the Son of man as He comes to judgment. In the sixth, chap. xi. 12, we shall see that it must also be the investiture of the Son of man. The cloud here must have a similar meaning.—(3) **And the rainbow was upon his head.** The article does not lead us to the well-known ordinary rainbow, or to the rainbow of Gen. ix. 13, but to that already mentioned at chap. iv. 3.—(4) **And his face was as the sun.** These words take us back to chap. i. 16, and again bring the sun before us in a light similar to that in which it is presented there,—as the source of burning, scorching heat.—(5) **And his feet as pillars of fire.** These words carry us to chap. i. 15, and the fire is that of judgment (comp. chap. xx. 9).—(6) **And he had in his hand a little book-roll open.** It appears from ver. 5 that the book must be in the left hand of the angel, and an important distinction is thus drawn between it and the roll of chap. v. The latter was 'on' the hand, and that hand the 'right;' the former is 'in' the hand, and that hand the 'left.' The contents of the two rolls,

therefore, cannot be exactly the same, although the fact that the word employed in the original for the 'roll' now mentioned is a diminutive of that which meets us at chap. v. 1, combined with the whole contents of the present passage, is sufficient to show us that the two rolls are of the same general character. The roll now before us is 'little' in comparison with the larger one previously spoken of, and it is 'open' while the latter was 'sealed.' The interpretation of the passage is affected by all these circumstances.

Vers. 2, 3. The action of the angel is next described. First, he **set his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the earth**, thus asserting his supremacy over the whole world; and then **he cried with a great voice as a lion roareth**, thus intimating that something terrible was about to be revealed. Immediately thereafter **the seven thunders uttered their voices**. The analogy of the 'seven churches,' 'seven spirits of God,' etc., leads directly to the conclusion that these thunders are seven, not because St. John at the moment heard seven, but because they represent the thunder of God in its completeness and intensity.

Two or three questions must still be answered in connection with these verses. First, as to the personality of the angel. On the one hand, it appears to be impossible to adopt the idea of many, that this angel is the Lord; for, throughout the Apocalypse, angels are everywhere distinguished from the Divine Beings, and in chap. v. the 'strong angel' spoken of is certainly neither the Father nor the Son. On the other hand, it appears equally impossible to think that we have before us simply a created angel. The mention of 'the cloud,' of 'the rainbow,' of the 'face as the sun,' of the 'feet as pillars of fire,' and of the 'little book-roll in the hand,' leads us to something more. These are the characteristics of the Divine Lord Himself. The explanation is to be sought in what has been already more than once remarked, that in the Apocalypse the action of any person or thing is said to be effected by means of an angel who expresses it. We have here, therefore, neither the Lord, nor a mere creature executing His will, but a representation of His action. The angel by whom such representation is effected has necessarily the attributes of the Being whose action he embodies.—Secondly, the light in which the angel appears is that of judgment, not of mercy and judgment combined. The 'rainbow' is indeed the symbol of mercy, but everything else mentioned speaks of judgment. Mercy is alluded to simply because the Lord is gracious, and because it would convey an imperfect and false idea of His character were we to think of Him only as a judge. It is the Lord of love who judges.—Thirdly, we have to ask as to the contents of the 'little book-roll.' These we have already seen cannot be the same as those of the larger book-roll of chap v. It is more difficult to determine what they are. Upon this point the most various opinions have been entertained. We cannot examine them, and must be content to note one or two particulars which may assist in guiding us to a satisfactory conclusion. (1) It is a well-known characteristic of the Apocalypse that it generally anticipates beforehand in some brief statement what is afterwards to be unfolded at greater length. We may be sure that the judgments contained in the little roll will meet us again in subsequent visions of this book: (2) The contents have an important relation to that work of prophesying or witnessing which is to distinguish the true people of God at the stage of their progress which they have now reached. The *witnessing* and not merely the *suffering* Church is to be comforted by the vision: (3) We have thus a point of connection with the consolatory vision of the two witnesses in chap. xi., and that too in a manner precisely analogous to the relation which exists between the two consolatory visions of chap. vii.; there, suffering in the first followed by heavenly bliss in the second; here, action in the first followed by going up to heaven in the cloud (chap. xi. 12). But the vision of the two witnesses, as we shall yet see, deals with the preservation of a faithful remnant in the midst of a professing but faithless Church which is cast out. The natural conclusion is, that the vision before us is also occupied with the same thought: (4) The effect produced upon the Seer by his action with the little roll is worthy of notice. When he eats the book the first taste of it is sweet: he has heard glad tidings and is filled with joy. When he has eaten the book, when he has had further experience of its contents, it is bitter. The bright dawn becomes clouded; joy gives way to disappointment and sorrow: (5) The whole symbolism is taken from Ezek. iii., and it is reasonable to suppose that not merely the facts but the aim and spirit of that chapter were present to the Apostle's mind. Of the latter, however, there can be no doubt. The language of the fourth and fifth verses of the chapter is unmistakeable, 'And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent unto a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel:' (6) We shall find, as we proceed, that a large part of the Book of Revelation, its most sublime, if at the same time its darkest and most mysterious, part is occupied with the judgments of God upon a worldly and apostate Church. Putting all these circumstances together, it seems most natural to suppose that the contents of the 'little book-roll' are occupied with the dealings of the Lord not so much towards the world as towards His Church in her connection with the world, when she yields to the temptations which the world presents to her, and when, from having been a pure virgin faithful to Him to whom she is espoused, she becomes a harlot. Thus also perhaps may we explain the epithet 'little' applied to this book-roll in contrast with that of chap. v. It is 'little,' not as being less important, but as relating more immediately to the fortunes of Christ's 'little flock.'

Ver. 4. The thunders must not only have been in themselves intelligible, but they must have been understood by the Seer. Hence, thinking probably of the command in chap. i. 11, he was about to write them. **A voice out of heaven**, however, was heard **saying, Seal the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.** We are not to suppose that the object of this command was to keep the contents of the thunders for ever concealed. These contents, we have seen, relate to the fortunes of Christ's Church and people. But they learn only by experience. They must pass through trials, whatever they may be, before darkness is dis-

pelled and light in its full brightness shines around them (comp. John ii. 22, xii. 16).

Vers. 5–7. Intimation is now made that though the thunders are sealed the judgments which they threatened will not be long delayed, and the solemn manner of making it corresponds to the great issues that are to come. **The angel whom the Seer saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven,** and sware by the great Creator of the universe **that there should be delay no longer.** The 'delay' here spoken of is the space of time referred to in Matt. xxiv. 22, where it is said that the days shall be shortened for the elect's sake. The coming of the end in view is next defined alike as to its time and its results. Its time shall be in the sounding of the seventh trumpet: its results shall be seen in the completing of the mystery of God, that is, in the completing of all His purposes with regard to His Church on earth. **—According to the good tidings which he declared.** The word 'good tidings' is remarkable. Most interpreters will admit that it does not imply that the tidings were only of mercy. In reality the whole context shows that they were tidings of judgment upon the enemies of God. Yet even these were 'good tidings,' for they told that 'the righteous Lord loveth righteousness,' and that for the welfare of His creatures He would yet 'take to Him His great power and reign.' It will be well to remember this in the interpretation of a more difficult passage to follow.

Ver. 8. The Seer is commanded to **take the open book-roll in the hand of the angel.**

Ver. 9. The command is obeyed, and the further instruction is given, **Take it, and eat it up.** For a similar action comp. Ezek. iii. 1. The eating of the roll can hardly be anything else than a symbol of the complete assimilation of its contents.

Ver. 10. The effect of eating the roll is next described. **It was,** says the Seer, **in my mouth sweet as honey, and when I had eaten it my belly was made bitter.** The double character of this effect was not produced by different parts of the contents of the book, as if these were partly sweet partly bitter, partly of joyful partly of sorrowful tidings. The contents of the book are one; are all, like those of the larger book-roll, judgment, are all 'mourning and lamentations and woe.' For the same reason also the double effect cannot be ascribed to the double character of the Seer, the sweetness being felt by him as a prophet, the bitterness as a man. He is a prophet throughout, and his human feelings have been so identified with those of his Lord that whatever is the Lord's pleasure is also his. Equally impossible is it to think that the bitterness was due to the thought of those persecutions which he and other faithful witnesses would have to endure in making known their message to the world. Believers feel that while they suffer they are walking in the steps of their great Master, and that they are suffering with Him. In the midst of suffering they learn to glory in His cross, and to welcome it as a gift of the Divine love (comp. Phil. i. 29; 1 Pet. iv. 13). The bitterness proceeds from the nature of the tidings. The little book-roll dealt with the fortunes of the Church, not of the world; and the fact that it did so made the first taste of it sweet. To learn that the Lord had chosen out of the nations a people for His name; that He 'loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish;'—such tidings could not fail to be sweet. But then to learn still further that that Church would forget her Lord, yield to the seductions of the world, and become lukewarm in the service of One who had bought her with His own precious blood, was bitter. Yet these were the contents of the book now eaten by the Seer. No wonder, therefore, that though sweet as honey in his mouth the little book made his belly bitter.

Ver. 11. The little book-roll has been eaten; and, in the midst of the judgments which it foretold, it has brought consolation to the Seer, for the only true consolation of the righteous is that all evil, whether in the world or in the Church, shall be put down, and that nothing but 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost' shall reign. Animated by this prospect he is ready to hear that he has still a work to do. He **must prophesy again before many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.** The intimation, **and they say unto me,** with which these words are introduced, may help us to understand the nature of the prophesying referred to, for these words are hardly equivalent to the formula 'It is said.' They may be much more naturally referred to the seven thunders which had already spoken at ver. 3. A voice of thunder, however, is a voice of judgment, and the 'prophesying' now spoken must be also judgment. One further remark may be made. The verb 'to prophesy' is used only twice in the Apocalypse, here and of the two witnesses at chap. xi. 3. In the latter case it cannot be confined to the proclamation of the visions of this book, and neither in like manner can it now be so. When, therefore, the Seer is told that he must 'prophesy,' the meaning does not appear to be that he must declare the contents of the little book to an audience the various parts of which are immediately enumerated. The meaning rather is that he must go on uttering to the world his general testimony to the truth of God, and so preparing the world for its self-chosen fate. In other words, the Seer in this verse is less the apocalyptic revealer than the minister of Divine truth in general, the type and pattern of all the preaching of the New Testament Dispensation.

CHAPTER XI. 1–14.

Second Consolatory Vision.

1 AND there was given me a [a] reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood,[1] saying,[2] Rise, and [b] measure the temple of
2 God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But[3] the court which is without the temple [c] leave[4] out, and measure it not; for it is[5] given unto the [d] Gentiles:[6] and the holy city
3 shall they [e] tread under foot [f] forty *and* two months. And I will give *power*[7] unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a [g] thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sack-
4 cloth. These are the two [h] olive trees, and the two candlesticks
5 standing before the God[8] of the earth. And if any man will[9] hurt them, [i] fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will[10] hurt them, he must in this
6 manner be killed. These have power[11] to shut heaven,[12] that it [k] rain not in[13] the days of their prophecy: and[14] have power over waters[15] to turn them to[16] [l] blood, and to smite the earth
7 with all plagues,[17] as often as they will.[18] And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth[19] out of the bottomless[20] pit[21] shall make war against[22] them, and
8 shall[23] overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies[24] *shall*[25] [m] *lie*[26] in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called [n] Sodom and Egypt, [o] where also our[27] Lord was cruci-
9 fied. And they of the people,[28] and kindreds,[29] and tongues, and nations, shall[30] see[31] their dead bodies[24] three days and an half, and shall[30] not [p] suffer[32] their dead bodies to be put in
10 graves.[33] And they that dwell upon the earth shall[34] rejoice over them, and make merry, and[34] shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets [q] tormented them that
11 dwelt on[35] the earth. And after[36] three days and an half the Spirit of life from[37] God entered into them, and they stood upon their [r] feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw[38]
12 them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended[39] up to[40] heaven in
13 a[41] [s] cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the

[a] Ezek. xl. 3.
[b] Ezek. xl. 5; Zech. ii. 2.
[c] Jo. ix. 34.
[d] Ps. lxxix. 1; Lu. xxi. 24.
[e] Lu. xxi. 24.
[f] Ch. xiii. 5.
[g] Ch. xii. 6.
[h] Zech. iv. 11; Rom. xi. 17.
[i] 2 Kings i. 10, 12; Jer. v. 14.
[k] 1 Kings xvii. 1; Lu. iv. 25; Jas. v. 17.
[l] Ex. vii. 20.
[m] Isa. xiv. 20.
[n] Isa. i. 10.
[o] Jo. xv. 20.
[p] Ps. lxxix. 2.
[q] 1 Kings xxi. 20.
[r] Ezek. xxxvii. 10.
[s] Acts i. 9.

[1] *omit* and the angel stood [2] and one said [3] And [4] cast
[5] hath been [6] nations [7] omit *power* [8] Lord [9] desireth to
[10] shall desire to [11] the power [12] the heaven [13] during [14] *add* they
[15] the waters [16] into [17] every plague [18] shall desire [19] cometh up
[20] *omit* bottomless [21] abyss [22] with [23] *omit* shall [24] body
[25] omit *shall* [26] lies [27] their [28] And from among the peoples
[29] tribes [30] *omit* shall [31] men look upon [32] suffer not
[33] laid in a tomb [34] *add* they [35] dwell upon [36] *add* the
[37] a spirit of life out of [38] beheld [39] went [40] into [41] the

city fell, and in the earthquake were slain[43] of men[43a] seven thousand:[44] and the remnant[45] were affrighted, and gave glory
14 to the God of heaven. The second woe is [f] past; *and*,[46] behold, [f] Ch. ix. 12. the third woe cometh quickly.

[43] killed [43a] *omit* of men [44] *add* persons
[45] rest [46] omit *and*

CONTENTS. The contents of this chapter will be better understood as we proceed with the exposition. In the meantime it is enough to say that we have a second consolatory vision, which stands to that of chap. x. in much the same relation as does the vision of the palm-bearing multitude in chap. vii. to the sealing there.

Ver. 1. **A reed was given** to the Seer,—it is not said by whom,—and we are left to infer, as at chap. vi. 2, 4, 8, 11, that it was by one in heaven. The word 'my' in ver. 3 may lead us to the thought of the Lord Himself. The reed is for measuring, but it is stronger than a common reed, and is thus more able to effect its purpose: it is **like unto a rod**. May it not even be a rod of judgment (comp. 1 Cor. iv. 21)? Omitting for the present the import of the measuring, we notice only that the idea is taken from Ezek. xl. 3; Zech. ii. 2. Three things are to be measured. First, **the temple of God**, meaning not the whole temple-buildings, but the Holy and Most Holy place. Secondly, **the altar**. This altar, considering where it stands, can only be that of incense, not the brazen altar transferred to another than its own natural position. Upon this altar the prayers of God's persecuted saints were laid (chap. viii. 3), and it is with the persecuted saints that we have here to do (ver. 7). Thirdly, they **that worship therein**, that is, in the innermost sanctuary of the temple; while to 'worship' is the expression of highest adoration.

The last clause alone is a sufficient proof that the three things to be measured are not to be understood literally. How could those who worship in the temple be thus measured with a reed? But, if one of three objects mentioned in the same sentence and in the same way be figurative, the obvious inference is that the other two must be looked at in a similar light. By the 'temple,' therefore, it is impossible to understand the literal temple in Jerusalem supposed to be as yet undestroyed. Even although we knew, on other and independent grounds, that the overthrow of the city by the Romans had not yet taken place, it would be entirely out of keeping with the Seer's method of conception to suppose that he refers to the temple on Mount Moriah. His temple imagery is always drawn not from that building but from the Tabernacle first erected in the wilderness. It is the shrine of the latter not of the former that he has in view, and the word used in the original, however its rendering in English may suggest such associations to us, has no necessary connection with the Temple of Solomon. For a clear proof that this is St. John's mode of viewing the *Ναός* (*i.e.* the shrine, the 'temple' here in question) see the note on ver. 19.

As to the import of the measuring there can be little doubt. It is determined, by the contrast of ver. 2, by the measuring of chap. xxi. 15, 16, and by the analogy of chap. vii., to be for preservation, not, as sometimes imagined, for destruction.

Ver. 2. While it shall be thus with the innermost part of the temple-buildings it shall be otherwise with the rest. **The court which is without the temple** includes every part of the precincts not belonging to the Holy and Most Holy place; and this fact, together with the instruction 'cast it out,' shows that it symbolizes not the world but the false members of the Church, the branches of the vine that bear no fruit. These parts of the building are not to be measured: they are to be 'cast out.' The expression is important. It is that of John ix. 34, 35, and implies exclusion from the community of God's people. The faithless members of the Church, those who have yielded to the power of the world, **have been given** over **to the nations**, the nations of chap. x. 11, of chap. xx. 3. (For contrast see chap. ii. 26.)—Of these nations it is further said, **the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months**. In the words 'the holy city' the first allusion is to Jerusalem, but not in a material sense, as if the meaning were that the literal city should be trodden down under the feet of hostile armies. The sense, whatever it be, is metaphorical, as in the case of the 'temple,' the 'altar,' and the 'court.' Jerusalem was the place which God had originally designed to be the residence of His people. In idea and in name it was still that place, but it had been profaned by too many of its citizens. At the time when our Lord knew it, and when its condition became to St. John the mould of the future, it contained both true and false members of the Jewish Church, those who were fulfilling the great end of the economy under which they lived and those who were proving themselves unworthy of their glorious destiny. The counterpart of this in after ages is the outward Christian Church, containing both good and bad members. Glorious things may be said of this city of God; but that with which we have now to do is the entrance of a heathen, of a false, element into her, by means of which the 'nations' tread her under foot (comp. Ps. lxxix. 1).

They do this for 'forty and two months.' The period thus alluded to meets us again in chap. xiii. 5, where it is said of the beast that 'power was given unto him to continue 40 and 2 months.' Again we read of '1260 days' (= 42 months of 30 days each) in chap. xi. 3, where the two witnesses prophesy 1260 days, and in chap. xii. 6, where the woman is nourished in the wilderness 1260 days. And once more, in chap. xii. 14 we read of the woman's being nourished for 'a time and times and half a time.' The comparison of the two latter passages proves that the time and times and half a time are equivalent to 1260 days; and we can thus have no doubt left upon our minds that all the three periods are

the same. This designation of time is taken from Dan. vii. 25 (comp. also Dan. xii. 7); and the different numbers must be understood symbolically. The main question is, What do they symbolize? First of all it is obvious that 3½ must be regarded as the half of 7. It is indeed expressly presented to us in this light in Dan. ix. 27 where it is said, 'and he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.' The middle of the week is the half of 7, or 3½. Hence the general meaning may be learned with an approach to certainty. Seven is the number of the covenant with its fulness of peace and joy and glory: three and a half is that number broken, incomplete, looking forward to something else. It symbolizes, therefore, a period of persecution and sorrow, when the covenant seems to be broken, and the promise to fail; when instead of joy there is tribulation, instead of the crown the cross. All the three numbers have essentially the same mystic meaning. Not only, however, is this the case; the considerations now adduced lead to the further conclusion that the three periods referred to denote not three periods of the same length but the same period, and that the change of nomenclature is due to the difference of aspect under which the period is viewed. When 'months' are spoken of the prominent idea seems to be that of the rule of evil, when 'days' that of the suffering of the good. Thus it will be found that chaps. xi. 2 and xiii. 5 on the one hand, and chaps. xi. 3 and xii. 6 on the other, go together. The 'times' or years of chap. xii. 6 lead us rather to the thought of God's preserving care of His Church while evil rules and good suffers. The space of 40 and 2 months is thus identical with that of 1260 days, and both express the whole time of the Church's militant and suffering condition in the world, the whole time between the First and Second Coming of the Lord. They are the latter half of the week of the prophet Daniel, the 'middle of the week' being the point from which the calculation runs.

Ver. 3. The voice is continued, and the use of the word **my** connected with the **two witnesses** seems to indicate that it is the Lord who speaks, though in all probability by means of the 'strong angel' mentioned in chap. x. 1. The witnesses receive both the words of their prophecy and the power to utter them. The duty of 'prophesying' laid upon them is that of proclaiming the truth of God for the instruction or warning of men; while the clothing **with sackcloth**, a rough cloth of goats' or of camels' hair, reminds us of Elijah and the Baptist (2 Kings i. 8; Matt. iii. 4), and indicates the sufferings which the witnesses shall endure in delivering their message (2 Kings xix. 1; Ps. xxx. 11; Isa. xxii. 12).

Ver. 4. First, the witnesses are described as **the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the Lord of the earth.** The figure is taken from Zech. iv., with this difference, that there we have only one candlestick with an olive tree on either side of it, while here we have two candlesticks as well as two olive trees. Clear indication is thus given that, whoever the two 'witnesses' may be, each combines in himself the functions both of the olive tree and of the candlestick, and that they are not, the one, one of these objects, and the other, the other. They stand 'before the Lord of the earth,' before the universal Ruler and King. They too, therefore, must be sought in something universal. Their 'standing before the Lord' indicates their acceptance in His sight and their readiness to act for Him (comp. vii. 9; Luke xxi. 36).

Ver. 5. **If any man desireth to hurt them fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies.** There can be no doubt that the allusion is to 2 Kings i. 10, 12, although literal fire may not be thought of, but rather those 'words' of the Lord in the mouth of His prophet of which it is said, 'I will make them fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them' (Jer. v. 14). In the last half of the verse we have the *lex talionis*, judgment returning in kind upon the oppressors of the just. These oppressors **hurt** to the extent of killing, just as the Jews 'went about to kill Jesus' in the days of His flesh. As a consequence, **in this manner must they be killed.**

Ver. 6. Not only does fire proceed out of the mouth of the witnesses; they have also **the power to shut the heaven that it rain not during the days of their prophecy, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague as often as they shall desire.** The allusions are obviously to Elijah and Moses, but the power of the witnesses is described in language far stronger than that of the Old Testament. For three and a half years only was rain kept back by Elijah: the witnesses have power to withhold it during the whole time of their prophecy. Moses had control over the waters of Egypt: they over all waters. The plagues with which Moses could smite were definite in number and limited in range: the witnesses may smite the whole earth with 'every plague as often as they shall desire.'

Ver. 7. That the witnesses have a **testimony** to deliver has already appeared from the words 'they shall prophesy' in ver. 3, and from their coming before us in ver. 4 as fruit-bearing and light-giving. This work they shall accomplish: this witness they shall 'finish' in the spirit of Him who cried upon the cross, 'It is finished:' and at that moment, as in His case so in theirs, their opponents shall seem to have the victory.—**The beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.** This 'beast' is without doubt that of chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 8, here mentioned by anticipation; and he shall act as the beast in Dan. vii. 21.

Ver. 8. Their enemies are not satisfied with putting them to death. Dishonour and contumely are heaped upon them after they have been slain. The use of the singular for the plural number in speaking of them in this verse is remarkable, for the true reading is not, as in the Authorised Version, 'their bodies shall lie' but **their dead body lies.** There must be a sense in which the witnesses, though spoken of as two, may be regarded as one. —Their dead body lies **in the street**, in the broad open way, where there are many passers-by to behold the contempt and the profanation (comp. Ps. lxxix. 3).—This street belongs to **the great city**, several characteristics of which are next given. **Spiritually** it **is called Sodom and Egypt**, and there **also their Lord was crucified.** That this city is in the first place Jerusalem not, as many suppose, Rome seems clear from the statement that it is the city in which the Lord

was crucified. But the question still arises, What does 'Jerusalem,' so spoken of, denote? The literal Jerusalem alone it cannot be, not only because all such names are in the Book of Revelation allegorically used, but also because the city is 'spiritually,' that is allegorically, called Sodom and Egypt. Sodom and Egypt, however, were both remarkable for three things, their sinfulness, their oppression of the people of God, and the judgments by which they were overtaken. As these ideas, again, correspond exactly with the course of thought in the present passage, we are justified in thinking that they are the ideas mainly associated in the mind of the Seer with the two names. 'The great city,' therefore, is something sinful, persecuting, doomed to judgment. Still further the thought of both Jews and Gentiles must be connected with this city—mention of the crucifixion leading us to the one, of Sodom and Egypt to the other. We are thus led to regard 'the great city' as a designation for a degenerate Christianity which has submitted to the world.

Ver. 9. The spectators mentioned in this verse come from the whole world in its fourfold designation of **peoples and tribes and tongues and nations**. All look upon the 'dead body' of the witnesses without commiseration for the miserable state in which it lies. This they do for three days and a half, not literal days but, according to the analogy of three and a half years, a broken, incomplete, and probably short period. That during this period the world **suffers not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb** heightens the picture of contempt and injury (comp. Gen. xxiii. 4; Isa. xiv. 19, 20).

Ver. 10. Even this is not all. **They that dwell upon the earth**, that is, the ungodly everywhere rejoice and hold high festival over their destruction. In the words used it is impossible to mistake the mocking contrast to God's holy festival as described in Neh. viii. 10–12.

Ver. 11. The short time of the world's triumph passes away. Then **a spirit of life out of God** enters into them, and imparts to them such power that they stand up upon their feet, and strike all beholders with terror.

Ver. 12. Nor that alone. They hear a voice summoning them to ascend into heaven in the presence of the same beholders, and they obey. **They went up into heaven in the cloud**, not in the clouds, or simply in a cloud; but in a distinct and definite cloud, that of the angel of chap. x. 1, or of Christ in chap. xiv. 14-16; and their triumph was witnessed by those who killed them.

Ver. 13. **And in that hour**, that is, at the very moment when the witnesses ascended, judgment fell upon the guilty world. There was a **great earthquake**, the constant symbol of judgment.—**The tenth part of the city fell.** The city is without doubt 'the great city' of ver. 8; but only a tenth part falls because judgment does not yet descend in all its fulness.—**In the earthquake were killed seven thousand persons.** The expression in the original for 'persons' is remarkable, meaning literally 'names of men.' A similar use of the word 'names' has already met us at chap. iii. 4, and the usage throws light upon the employment of the word 'name' in the writings of St. John. It seems hardly necessary to say that the earthquake, the fall of the tenth part of the city, and the number 7000, must all be regarded as symbolical.—**And the rest were affrighted.** By 'the rest' are to be understood all the ungodly who had not been killed.—They are not only 'affrighted,' they **gave glory to the God of heaven.** In what sense, it must be asked, are we to take these words? Do they express, as many imagine, the conversion of the Jews, or, as many others, that of the degenerate Christians of the city? We must answer, Neither. Conversion is not spoken of, and there is nothing to lead us to the thought of Jews. Inasmuch, however, as we are here dealing with inhabitants of Jerusalem, the holy city, it is not improbable that the faithless members of the Church, as distinguished from the faithful witnesses, are in the prophet's view. Yet he does not behold their conversion. To the change implied in that word the being 'affrighted' is not a suitable preliminary; and the whole tone of the passage suggests that, when they who are thus affrighted give glory to the 'God of heaven' (comp. chap. xvi. 11), they do so from no recognition of His heavenly character as compared with the wickedness of earth, but from the conviction which they have received of the irresistibleness of His power and the terror of His judgments. They are terrified, awed, subdued, but they are not converted. It is possible that conversion may follow, but we are not told that such will be the case.

Looking back upon the whole of this difficult passage, one or two questions in connection with it demand an answer.

The first and most important of these is, Who are the two witnesses? Our space will not permit even a slight attempt to discuss the opinions of others. We must content ourselves with saying that it is in the highest degree improbable that these witnesses are either two individuals already known to us, such as Enoch and Elijah, Moses and Elijah, Zerubbabel and Joshua, or two who are yet to arise, and in whom the power of the true Church shall be concentrated. By such an interpretation the number two is understood with a literalness inconsistent with the symbolism of numbers in this book. If, too, we take literally the number of the witnesses, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to show why we should not give a literal interpretation to their prophesying, their miracles, their death, their resurrection, and their ascension into heaven in the presence of their enemies. Their prophesying also, as we have already seen, reaches to the whole earth, for it is that of chap. x. 11; while the plagues inflicted came upon all the dwellers upon earth (ver. 10). Nor is the time during which the witnesses prophesy less inconsistent with this view. No individuals live through so long a period. It may indeed be at once admitted that, in a manner conformable to the whole structure of the Apocalypse, the Seer starts from the thought of two historical persons. Examples of this kind in sufficient number, and of sufficient importance to justify his resting upon them as the material basis of his prophecy, were not wanting either in the Old Testament or in the history of our Lord. In the former we have Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb, Elijah and Elisha, Zerubbabel and Joshua, and even the two pillars in the temple, Jachin and Boaz. In the latter we have our Lord sending forth both his Apostles and the Seventy disciples two by two, together with such a promise as that contained in the words 'if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything

that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven' (Matt. xviii. 19). Although, however, the starting-point may be found in such allusions the Seer certainly passes from the thought of any two individuals whatever to that of all who in any age or land fulfil the idea of witnessing present to his mind. The two witnesses are thus believers who, amidst all the defection of others, remain faithful to their Lord. They are the true Divine seed within the outward Church, the little flock that listens only to the voice of the Good Shepherd and is led astray neither by the world nor hireling shepherds. All the particulars of the description correspond to this view. One other remark may be made. The climax of the Apocalypse is peculiarly observable in the relation of the vision of the Two Witnesses to that of the Palm-bearing Company in chap. vii. The latter speaks only of deliverance from tribulation; the former introduces us to the thought of the action which brings tribulation with it. The faithful in Christ Jesus have *advanced* from being merely sufferers to being zealous agents in their Master's cause. They have been executing their commission, uttering their testimony, working their work, warring against their foes. Their position is loftier, nobler, more inspiriting; and their reward is proportioned to their struggle. Commission, work, reward, judgment,—everything, in short, is higher than before.

Ver. 14. **The second woe is past, behold the third woe cometh quickly.** At chap. viii. 13 mention was made of three Woes. At chap. ix. 12 the first Woe was said to be past. The sixth trumpet then sounded and was continued to chap. ix. 21. From chap. x. 1 to chap. xi. 13 we have had consolatory visions, and now in the verse before us the second Woe is declared to be past. The object of the verse, therefore, is to remind us of what we might perhaps have forgotten, that the second woe had closed some time before, but that nothing shall now interrupt the sounding of the seventh trumpet on the coming of the third Woe.

CHAPTER XI. 15–19.

The sounding of the Seventh Trumpet.

15 AND the seventh angel sounded; and there were[1] great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms[2] of this[3] world are[4] become *the kingdoms*[5] of our Lord, and of his Christ; and
16 he shall reign [a] for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat[6] before God on their [b] seats,[7] fell upon their
17 faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord[8] God[9] Almighty,[10] which art, and[11] wast, and art to come;[12] because thou hast taken to thee[13] thy great power,
18 and hast [c] reigned.[14] And the nations were [d] angry,[15] and thy wrath is come,[16] and the time of the dead, that they should be judged,[17] and that thou shouldest give reward[18] unto thy servants the prophets, and[19] to[20] the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great;[21] and shouldest[22] [e] destroy them
19 which destroy the earth. And[23] the temple of God[24] was opened[25] in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament:[26] and there were[27] lightnings, and voices, and thunderings,[28] and an earthquake, and great hail.

[a] Dan. ii. 44.
[b] Ch. iv. 4.
[c] Ch. v. 12, 13
[d] Ps. ii. 1.
[e] Cp. 1 Cor. iii. 17.

[1] followed [2] kingdom [3] the [4] is [5] the possession
[6] sit [7] thrones [8] Lord, [9] God, [10] the Almighty
[11] *add* which [12] *omit* and art to come [13] *omit* to thee
[14] didst reign [15] roused to wrath [16] came [17] to be judged
[18] and the time to give their reward [19] both [20] *omit* to
[21] the small and the great [22] and to [23] And there was opened
[24] *add* that is [25] *omit* was opened [26] covenant [27] followed [28] thunders

CONTENTS. In the verses before us we have the seventh Trumpet and, because the seventh Trumpet, therefore also the third Woe. It may seem indeed at first sight as if what is now to be revealed did not present the characteristics of a Woe, and were rather occupied with describing

the triumph of the Church. In the meantime it is enough to say that the triumph of the Church implies the overthrow of her enemies, and that the greater and more glorious the one the more disastrous and humiliating must be the other. Particulars in these verses still more strikingly illustrating the character of a Woe will be noticed as we proceed with the exposition.

Ver. 15. It is difficult to say to whom the **great voices** spoken of in this verse belong. They can hardly come from angels, or from the four living creatures, or indeed from any created thing. They seem rather a poetic method of giving expression to the fact that those counsels of the Almighty which had been long since taken, but which had been hitherto concealed from every eye but that of faith, were about to go into open execution.—The words uttered by the voices are, **The kingdom of the world is become the possession of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.** The word 'kingdom' used here is to be understood in the sense of 'dominion over,' and not in that of all the kingdoms of the world united into one. This dominion is celebrated as given to the Father in the Son and to the Son in the Father; and it shall be theirs for ever and ever, all its enemies being completely overthrown.

Ver. 16. The voices in heaven are now answered by the twenty-four Elders, the representatives of the redeemed Church on earth. Enraptured with the prospect before them, these **fell upon their faces and worshipped God.**

Ver. 17 contains the first part of their song of praise and thanksgiving. In reading, a comma is to be placed after the word **Lord,** which presents us with the name of Him who has thus triumphed, and brought the troubles of His Church to an end. The name 'Lord' is then followed by three appellations as at chap. iv. 8, first, **God;** secondly, **the Almighty;** thirdly, **which art and which wast,** the third clause usually belonging to this last appellative, 'which is to come,' being left out because no longer needed: the Lord is come. This part of the song of praise deals with the general statement that the Lord has **taken** to Him His **great power.** That power had indeed been always His, but for a time He had permitted His enemies to contend against it. He is to permit this no longer.

Ver. 18 contains the second part of the song of praise, defining more accurately, and apparently in three particulars, the precise nature of the moment which had arrived, and of the events which distinguish it. The first of these particulars is, **The nations were roused to wrath** (comp. Ps. ii. 1, and especially Rev. xx. 3, 9). Instead of being converted at the last moment, the nations are excited to fiercer rage than ever against God. They are not merely angry against Him; that they had always been. They are roused to a sudden burst of wrath. Such is the true meaning of the original; and, thus looked at, the words before us really form an epitome of chap. xx. 7–9. The second particular is, **Thy wrath came,** the wrath of God, so much more terrible than that of the nations. The third particular occupies the remainder of the verse, and seems again to be subdivided into three parts—(1) **The time of the dead to be judged.** By 'the dead' here we are not to understand all men both good and bad, but simply the latter; the judgment spoken of is not general, it belongs to the wicked alone. This appears from the use of the word 'judge,' which is always employed by St. John to indicate only what is due to sin and sinners, as well as from the fact that the 'giving reward' immediately described is obviously not a part of the judgment, but an independent member of the group of things here spoken of. (2) **And to give their reward unto thy servants the prophets, both the saints, and them that fear thy name, the small and the great.** Much difficulty has been experienced by commentators in their attempts to arrange these clauses. Without dwelling on the opinions of others, we suggest that the true arrangement is to take the first class mentioned, 'thy servants the prophets,' as standing alone at the head of the group, and as including all those classes afterwards referred to. All God's people are prophets. As we have seen in the previous part of the chapter, they are 'witnesses' who 'prophesy;' they proclaim the Word of God to a sinful world (comp. ver. 3). These prophets are then divided into two classes, 'the saints,' and 'they that fear God's name.' The two classes appear to be mentioned upon the principle of which we have already had several illustrations, that objects are beheld by the Seer in two aspects, the one taken from the sphere of Jewish, the other from that of Gentile, thought. 'Saints,' or consecrated ones, was the name for all true Israelites. 'They that fear God' was, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles, the appellation constantly applied to Gentile Proselytes. No distinction is indeed drawn between a Jewish and a Gentile portion of the Church. Both are really one, but they may be, and are, viewed under a double aspect. The last clause, 'the small and the great,' then applies to all who have been mentioned. While, therefore, the 'dead' are 'judged,' the children of God, the members of His believing Church, receive their 'reward.' (3) **And to destroy them which destroy the earth,** where the *lex talionis* is again worthy of notice.

Ver. 19. We have here exhibited in act what had just been proclaimed in word (vers. 14–18). As throwing light upon the imagery of vers. 1 and 2 it is important to notice that, when **there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven, there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant.** The word 'temple' is apt to mislead, for we immediately think of the temple on Mount Moriah; but the innermost shrine is alone spoken of in the original, that most Holy Place which belonged not only to the later temple but to the Tabernacle in the wilderness. In the former the ark of God's covenant could not have been seen, for it had disappeared at the destruction of the first temple, long before the days of St. John. The inference is clear that, although the word 'temple' is used, it is really the Tabernacle from which the imagery is obtained. No doubt the temple thus spoken of was 'in heaven,' but to the eye of the Seer things in heaven were the type and pattern of the heavenly things on earth; and no one who has entered into his spirit will maintain that, if in this verse the shrine of the *Tabernacle* be referred to, it is possible to find another and a different reference for the shrine spoken of in the first verse of the chapter. All arguments, therefore, as to the date of the Apocalypse, drawn from the use of the word 'temple' in ver. 1, are necessarily unfounded. It is the Tabernacle as

it is described in the Law, not a temple of stone existing in his own day, that is in the writer's view. The 'ark of God's covenant' is the symbol of God's covenant love to His people; the type of the Incarnate Lord in whose heart the Law of God is laid up, and who is the 'propitiatory' (Rom. iii. 25) or Mercy-seat.—**And there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.** We have similar judgments at chap. viii. 5, at the close of the seventh seal, and when preparation was made for the sounding of the trumpets. We shall again meet them in chap. xvi. 18, at the close of the seventh bowl. We are now, therefore, at the close of the seventh trumpet, and about to enter upon the seven bowls. It will be observed that these 'lightnings,' etc., are only exhibited in heaven. They do not yet fall upon the earth, but are symbols of what is to come.

CHAPTER XII. 1–XIII. 1A.

The First great Enemy of the People of God.

1 AND there appeared a great wonder[1] in heaven; a woman
clothed[2] with the [a]sun, and the moon under her feet, [a] Cant. vi. 10.
2 and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being[3]
with child cried,[4] travailing in birth, and [b]pained[5] to be de- [b] Isa. vii. 14, lxvi. 7; Mic. iv. 9; Jo. xvi. 21.
3 livered. And there appeared another wonder[6] in heaven; and
behold a great red [c]dragon, having [d]seven heads and [e]ten [c] Ezek. xxix. 3. [d] Ch. xiii. 1.
4 horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.[7] And his tail drew[8] [e] Dan. vii. 20.
the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the
earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was
ready[9] to be delivered, for to [f]devour her child as soon as it [f] Ex. i. 15-22; Mat. ii. 16.
5 was born.[10] And she brought forth a [g]man child,[11] who was [g] Jo. xvi. 21.
to [h]rule all[12] nations with a rod[13] of iron: and her child was [h] Ch. ii. 27; Ps. ii. 9.
6 caught up unto God, and *to*[14] his throne. And the woman fled
into the [i]wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, [i] Ver. 14.
that they should feed[15] her there [k]a thousand two hundred [k] Ch. xi. 3.
and threescore days.
7 And there was[16] war in heaven: [l]Michael and his angels [l] Dan. x. 13, 21, xii. 1. Cp. Jude 9.
fought[17] against[18] the dragon; and the dragon fought[19] and his
8 angels, and [m]prevailed not; neither was their place found any [m] Jo. i. 5.
9 more in heaven. And the great dragon was [n]cast out, that[20] [n] Jo. xii. 31.
old [o]serpent, called[21] the Devil, and [p]Satan, which deceiveth [o] Gen. iii. 1; 2 Cor. xi. 3. [p] Ch. ii. 9.
the whole world:[22] he was cast out into the [q]earth, and his [q] Lu. x. 18.
10 angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud[23] voice
saying in heaven,[24] Now is come[25] salvation, and strength,[26] and
the kingdom of our God, and the power[27] of his Christ: for the
accuser of our brethren is cast down,[28] which accused[29] them

[1] sign [2] arrayed [3] was [4] and she crieth out [5] in pain
[6] sign [7] and upon his heads seven diadems [8] draweth
[9] about [10] that when she is delivered he may devour her child
[11] And she was delivered of a son, of man's sex,
[12] who as a shepherd is to tend all the [13] sceptre [14] unto [15] may nourish
[16] fell out [17] making war [18] with [19] made war [20] the
[21] he that is called [22] he that deceiveth the whole inhabited world
[23] great [24] in heaven saying [25] *add* the [26] the power
[27] authority [28] out [29] who accuseth

11 [r] before our God day and night. And they overcame him by[30] the blood of the Lamb, and by[30] the word of their testimony;
12 and they [s] loved not their lives[31] unto the[32] death. Therefore rejoice, *ye* heavens, and ye that [t] dwell[33] in them. Woe to the inhabiters of[34] the[35] earth and of[36] the sea! for[37] the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he[38]
13 knoweth[39] that he hath but a [u] short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto[40] the earth, he [v] persecuted
14 the woman which brought forth the man *child*.[41] And to the woman were given two[42] wings of a[43] great [w] eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face
15 of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a [x] flood[44] after the woman, that he might cause her to be
16 carried away of the flood.[44] And the earth helped the woman, and the earth [y] opened her mouth, and [z] swallowed up the
17 flood[44] which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth[45] with[46] the woman, and went[47] to make war with the [a] remnant[48] of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have[49] the testimony of Jesus Christ.[50]

CHAP. XIII. 1A. And I[51] stood[52] upon the sand of the sea.

[r] Job i. 6, 9, ii. 4, 5.
[s] Ch. ii. 10.
[t] Jo. i. 14; ch. vii. 15, xiii. 6, xxi. 3.
[u] Cp. ch. xvii. 10.
[v] Ex. xiv. 7, 8; Jo. xv. 20.
[w] Ex. xix. 4; Deut. xxxii. 11.
[x] Ps. xviii. 4, cxxiv. 3-5.
[y] Num. xvi. 32.
[z] Ex. xiv. 13; Josh. iii. 16, 17.
[a] Ch. ii. 24, ix. 20, xx. 5.

[30] because of
[31] life even
[32] *omit* the
[33] tabernacle
[34] *omit* to the inhabiters of
[35] for the
[36] for
[37] because
[38] knowing
[39] out into
[40] the two
[41] the child, of man's sex
[42] the two
[43] the
[44] river
[45] roused to wrath
[46] against
[47] *add* away
[48] rest
[49] hold
[50] *omit* Christ
[51] he
[52] took his stand

CONTENTS. The third Woe, or the seventh Trumpet, came to an end with chap. xi.; and, as the seven Trumpets followed immediately after the seven Seals, we might now have expected that these, in their turn, would be followed by the seven Bowls. The pouring out of these Bowls, however, does not begin until we reach chap. xv. Three chapters intervene; and it becomes both important and difficult to fix their place in the articulation of the Apocalypse as a whole. The inquiry is rendered more difficult than it might otherwise have been by the fact that chap. xii. seems distinctly to take us back to the beginning of the Christian era, to the birth of Christ. Can it be, then, that hitherto we have witnessed only the fortunes of the Jewish Church, and that the Christian Church is now to be brought before us in the wider sphere of the Gentile mission? The supposition is plausible, but it is hardly possible to accept it. The Church of Christ is not thus divided by St. John into two parts. He takes his figures, indeed, at one moment from Judaism, at another from Gentilism, but it is always one Church that he has in view, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek. The enemies of the Church, again, described in chaps. xii., xiii., are certainly not peculiar to her Gentile branch, but are equally hostile to all believers from whatever quarter they come. The course of events, too, under the seven Bowls is so strictly parallel, though at the same time climactic, to that under the seven Trumpets, that it is impossible to regard the former in any other light than as a series of visions directed to the same object and filled with substantially the same meaning. How then explain this long intercalary portion of three chapters? The key is to be found in the words of chap. xv. 1, 'Seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.' We are on the verge of the seven final and most disastrous plagues. The moment is thus far more critical than any at which we have previously stood. The purposes of the Almighty are now to be fully accomplished. The whole mystery of His dealings with a sinful world to which He has offered salvation is about to end. No place, therefore, could be more suitable than the present for once more gathering together the main elements of the conflict and the main features of the result.

The first object of the Seer is to give us a full and correct idea of the three great enemies of the people of God. Of these the earliest and chief is the Dragon; and to make us acquainted at once with his power and with his weakness is the aim of chap. xii. The chapter obviously divides itself into three parts or scenes, the relation of which to one another will come before us in the course of exposition.

Ver. 1. **And there appeared a great sign in**

heaven. The 'sign' consists of three particulars, and the first of these is again divided into three parts, mention of which occupies the remainder of this verse, **a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.** The immense body of light constituting the sun is her garment. The moon, the second of the light-giving bodies of heaven, is under her feet, yet certainly not in token of subjection,—an idea entirely out of keeping with the position immediately afterwards assigned to the twelve stars. Nor does it seem possible to behold in 'the moon' a representation of the Law, or of the legal Israel, as the foundation of the Christian Church. The Church is founded not on the Law but on Christ (1 Cor. iii. 11). In order to ascertain the meaning we must take sun, moon, and stars together; and, when we do so, the idea appears to be that the woman is completely enveloped in light. This is not secured by the simple mention of the sun as her garment, for that only wraps her body round from the shoulders to the feet. The other bodies of light which shine in heaven are therefore called into requisition. By means of them she has light around, beneath, and above her. The stars are not set as jewels in her crown. They *are* her crown, a crown of victory. The woman is a conqueror, and twelve is the number of the Church. (For the whole description comp. Song of Solomon vi. 10; Rev. i. 16, xxi. 12, 14.)

Ver. 2. **And she was with child.** These words form the second particular of the vision; while the third represents her as at that moment suffering the pangs of childbirth, **and she crieth out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered.**

To the question, Who is this woman? different answers have been given. We need not dwell upon them. In one sense or another she must be the Church of God, yet not the mere Jewish Church, but the Church in the largest conception that we can form of it, as first indeed planted in Israel but afterwards extended to all nations. More will have to be said upon this point immediately. In the meantime, if it be objected that Christ bears the Church, not the Church Christ, it may be sufficient to reply that there is a sense in which Christ may truly be called the Son of the Church. He is the flower of the Chosen Family, as concerning the flesh He comes of Israel. So much is He one with His people that even His conception by the power of the Spirit and His birth of a virgin (who had no power of her own to produce Him) have their counterpart in them. They are born of the Spirit: they are the many children of a mother who was barren (Gal. iv. 27). The Church, therefore, may properly be described by images taken from the history of Christ's own mother and of His own nativity.

Ver. 3. **And there appeared another sign in heaven.** In every respect this second sign is the counterpart or opposite of the first; and, like it, it is described in three particulars. The first has relation to the object seen.—**And behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems.** The dragon is 'great' in power. He is 'red' with the colour of blood because he kills men (chap. xvii. 3, 6; John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 12). He has 'seven heads and ten horns,' a figure by which is indicated his rule over all the kingdoms of this world as well as the force with which he rules them. The 'diadems,' it may be further noticed, are not crowns like that of the woman. They are rather bands or fillets round the head. Even in the greatest lustre of his might the dragon is not a conqueror.

Ver. 4. **His tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.** The second particular thus mentioned of the dragon has relation to what he does, and is in contrast with what had been said of the woman when we were told that she 'was with child.' The present tense of the first half of the sentence shows that the words describe a characteristic of the dragon, an element of his nature, and not something that happened at the moment. The woman was pregnant with life, the dragon can do nothing but destroy. Mention has been so frequently made of a 'third part' of things (chaps. viii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, ix. 15, 18) that we cannot be surprised at meeting it again, and all that it seems possible to say is that the proportion is not to be too literally interpreted. Enough that it designates great influence for evil, yet influence restrained by a power mightier than its own. The second half of the sentence is founded upon Dan. viii. 10, and the allusion in the mention of 'stars' is to powers originally heavenly. Against men who are made to shine as stars in the heavenly firmament the dragon can do nothing. They have rather trampled him beneath their feet and gained over him an everlasting victory. The 'stars of heaven' spoken of can only be those angels of whom it is elsewhere said that they 'kept not their first estate' (Jude, ver. 6). In this particular the work of the dragon is again presented to us as the exact counterpart of that of the woman—

> 'She raises mortals to the skies,
> He draws the angels down.'

And the dragon stood before the woman which was about to be delivered that, when she is delivered, he may devour her child. In these words we have the dragon doing what Pharaoh did to Israel (Ex. i. 15-22), and again and again in the Psalms and Prophets Pharaoh is spoken of as the dragon (Ps. lxxiv. 13; Isa. xxvii. 1, li. 9; Ezek. xxix. 3). Nor is it without interest in this connection to remember that Pharaoh's crown was wreathed with a dragon (the asp or serpent of Egypt), and that just as the eagle was the ensign of Rome so the dragon was that of Egypt. Hence the significance of Moses' rod being turned into a serpent. It is worth while to notice, too, how entirely the imagery agrees with the record of the infancy of our Lord in St. Matthew's Gospel (comp. especially Matt. ii. 13, 15). The motive alike of Pharaoh and of Herod was envy, Satan's motive. In this verse also the dragon is in direct contrast with the woman. She is to bear a living child: he would destroy it as soon as it was born.

Ver. 5. The birth takes place. The woman is **delivered of a son, of man's sex.** The last expression is remarkable. In the Authorised Version we read simply of 'a man child,' in the Revised of 'a son, a man child.' We have given another rendering in the hope of thereby bringing out the force which in the original obviously belongs to the words. The object is not simply to tell us that the 'son' is a male, which as a son he must be, but to impress upon us the thought of his manhood, power, and force. He is already more than a child; the properties of manhood belong

to Him from His birth (comp. John xvi. 21 and note there).—The function of this Son is **as a shepherd to tend all the nations with a sceptre of iron.** He is to subdue and rule the hostile world (chap. ii. 27); and He is **caught up unto God and unto his throne** not merely that He may be safe there, but that with Divine power He may destroy him who would have destroyed Himself (chap. iii. 21). It may be well to observe that this power is not said to be as yet actually exercised by the 'son.' It belongs to Him, and it shall be exercised in due season.

Ver. 6. **And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they may nourish her there a thousand, two hundred, and threescore days.** The fortunes of the woman's child having been described, we are now informed of her own. The flight of Elijah into the wilderness, perhaps even the temptation of our Lord there, is present to the writer's mind; and the words are applicable to the condition of the Church during her whole pilgrimage state in the present world.

Thus closes the first scene of the chapter, and we have now to ask as to its meaning. It appears to us that the key to this is to be found in the opening verses of the Gospel of St. John (chap. i. 1–5), the parallelism of which to the present passage it is impossible to mistake. We have the same contrasts as those there presented,—light, darkness, light shining in the darkness, the darkness trying to prevail against the light, but not overcoming it (see note on John i. 5). Here also, as there, nothing is said of the origin of the darkness. We read only that it exists.

If these observations be correct we can now understand the scene. It is not interrupted at ver. 7, in order that the war in heaven may be described, and again resumed at ver. 13. There is a marked difference between the two scenes contained in vers. 1–6 and vers. 13–17, and the difference consists in this, that the first is ideal, the second actual. Strictly speaking, the woman in vers. 1–6 is neither the Jewish nor the Christian Church. She is light from Him 'who is light, and with whom there is no darkness at all,' light which had been always shining before it was partially embodied either in the Church of the old or the new covenant. Her actual conflict with the darkness has not begun. We behold her in her own glorious existence, and it is enough to dwell upon the potencies that are in her as 'a light of man.' In like manner the dragon is not yet to be identified with the devil or Satan. That identification does not take place till we reach ver. 9. The former differs from the latter as the abstract and ideal power of evil differs from evil in the concrete. As the woman is ideal light, light before it appears in the Church upon earth, so the dragon is ideal darkness, the power of sin before it begins its deadly warfare against the children of God. Thus also we learn what is intended by the son who is born to the woman. He is not the Son actually incarnate but the ideally incarnate Son, 'the true light, which lighteth every man, coming into the world' (John i. 9). More difficulty may be felt in answering the question, whether, along with the Son Himself, we are to see in this 'son, of man's sex,' the true members of Christ's Body. Ideally, it would seem that we are to do so. All commentators allow that in the son's being 'caught up unto God and unto His throne' there is a reference to the ascension and glorification of our Lord. But, if so, it appears to be impossible to separate between the risen, ascended, and glorified Lord and those who are in Him thus risen, ascended, and glorified. In a note on John xvi. 21 we have called attention to the use of the word 'man' instead of child in that verse, as showing that we are there invited to behold the new birth of regenerated humanity, that new life in a risen Saviour with which the Church springs into being. The thought thus presented in the words of Jesus meets us again in this vision of the Seer. Christ's true people as well as Himself are made to sit down with Him in His throne, even as He sat down with His Father in His throne (chap. iii. 21). They not less than their Lord tend as a shepherd the nations with a sceptre of iron, even as He received of His Father (chap. ii. 26, 27). We cannot separate Him from them or them from Him. Everything then in these verses is anticipatory or ideal. The forces are on the field. We see light and darkness, their natural antagonism to each other, the fierce enmity of the darkness against the light, the apparent success but real defeat of the darkness, the apparent quenching but real triumph of the light. God's eternal plan is before us. We have a 'pattern' like that 'showed to Moses in the mount' (comp. chap. iv. 11).

Vers. 7–9. With the words of ver. 7 the second scene of the chapter opens, and the transition from the ideal to the actual begins. As the first scene, too, corresponded to the first paragraph of the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel (vers. 1–5), so this scene corresponds to its second paragraph (vers. 6–13). It is not enough that the light shall withstand the darkness. It has also to assault and overcome it. Hence it is that Michael and his angels are the first to move; and hence in all probability the remarkable grammatical construction of ver. 7 in the original,—a construction which seems intended to bring out this thought.

The war opens **in heaven.** No explanation is afforded of our finding evil there; nor is there greater difficulty in conceiving of evil in heaven than in admitting its existence upon earth. All things are primarily good and pure and holy. Such is the fundamental idea of existence; but this idea is disturbed by sin. The good is not perfectly unmixed; and, without knowing how the evil originated, we are compelled to acknowledge that it exists. Traces of the same teaching as that found here are to be seen in 1 Kings xxii.; Job i., ii.; Zech. iii.; and in the words of Jesus, of which this whole scene is a symbolical representation, 'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven' (Luke x. 18). The war begun is conducted on the one side by **Michael and his angels,** on the other by **the dragon and his angels.** The mention of Michael is taken from Dan. x. 13, 21, xii. 1; comp. Jude 9. He is certainly not Jesus Himself, nor is he merely a created angel to whose guardianship the Church is committed. He is rather an expression of Jesus, an aspect (if we may so speak), a representation, of the Divine good embodied in Him; and His angels are the varied agencies belonging to that good and executing its designs.—The 'dragon' is next more completely identified by a description consisting of three particulars. First, he is **the old serpent,** a reference to the

history of the fall. Secondly, **he is he that is called the devil and Satan**, the former of these terms denoting the deceiver (chap. xx. 8), the second the accuser (ver. 10), of the saints. Thirdly, he is **he that deceiveth the whole inhabited world**, the world with *all* its inhabitants, and not simply them that 'dwell upon the earth.' Not that he succeeds in eventually betraying all. But even the saints he endeavours to deceive. He tempts them as he tempted our Lord in the wilderness.—When the war has been continued for a time, the dragon is not only defeated, but no place is found for him any more in heaven. He **was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.** The victory of good over evil is complete. It may be well to notice that, if the devil is thus cast out of heaven, out of the assembly of the saints, he must have been originally good. Had he not been so he would never have been in heaven, but would have ruled from a past eternity in some realm of his own.

Vers. 10–12. The victory thus gained is followed by a song of praise and thanksgiving, which proceeds from **a great voice in heaven.** Whose voice this is we are not told, and it may be well to leave it in its indefiniteness.—The song is one of adoring praise that **the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ**, have been perfectly established. 'Now is there judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out;' 'He will convict the world concerning judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged' (John xii. 31, xvi. 8, 11). —This victory of the 'brethren' has been gained **because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony.** By the former can only be understood the blood of Jesus shed and presented before God on behalf of His people, by the latter that testimony of Jesus, that witness concerning Him, which they had been enabled to deliver.

When the victory has thus been spoken of as gained the 'great voice' further cries, **Rejoice ye heavens, and ye that tabernacle in them.** They who thus tabernacled in the heavens can hardly be angels; nor are they the spirits of the just made perfect contrasted with the righteous still struggling upon earth. The victory of all the righteous is by this time supposed to be complete. They can be no other than the whole redeemed family of God. These form the Divine Tabernacle, the place in which God rests, as He rested of old in the tabernacle in the wilderness (comp. chap. vii. 15, xiii. 6, xxi. 3). Thus constituting a tabernacle for God, they may by an easy transition be said themselves 'to tabernacle,' for the true idea of the Tabernacle consisted in this, that it was the meeting-place of God and man. There is no thought of the transitoriness of a tent, or of tent life. While all the good rejoice, there is **woe for the earth and for the sea**, that is, not the neutral earth or the ocean, but all who are unconnected with God's kingdom 'the heavens.'—**Because the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.** The consciousness that it is so fills him with the rage of despair.

The second scene of the chapter is a distinct advance upon the first. We pass from the dragon the ideal representative of evil to the devil or Satan, known to us as the source of all the sin and misery from which earth suffers. Further, we learn why the Church on earth has to contend with this great adversary. He has been cast, with his angels, out of heaven; and it is God's decree that the main and last struggle between good and evil shall be fought out on earth. Among men, not angels, the plan of redemption shall be conducted to its glorious issue. To impress these thoughts upon us is the reason why the second scene of this chapter has its place assigned to it.

Vers. 13, 14. From what has been said it will be evident that with the 13th verse there is no reverting to the point which we had reached at ver. 6. On the contrary, another step is taken in advance; and we are invited to behold in actual warfare the forces that in the first scene had been only ideally described, and the entrance of one of which into the world had been brought before us in the second. The dragon has not been led to submission by the fact that he had been driven out of heaven. He has rather been roused to greater fury (ver. 12), and in that fury he attacks the woman. She is described as **the woman which brought forth the child of man's sex**, and is thus identified with the woman of ver. 1. Yet she is not exactly the same. Then she was viewed as the ideal, now she is viewed as the actual Church, not indeed as the Church of Israel, but as the Church universal, the Church of every age and nation, the Church within which the light of Divine truth shines, and which is persecuted by the devil's darkness.

Although, however, thus persecuted the woman is not overcome. The light is safe under the care of God. This circumstance is set forth in the fact that **to the woman were given the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness into her place.** The flight, the wilderness, the nourishment afforded there, and the flood of water to be immediately spoken of, remind us so much of the flight of Israel from Egypt to the promised land as to leave no doubt that these events lie at the bottom of the description, although, as usual, they are treated with great freedom, forming only the starting-point from which the Seer proceeds to the clothing of his idea. The eagle is certainly not that of chap. viii. 13. Yet the articles employed in the original, which are not generic, show that a definite eagle is meant. It can be no other than the eagle of Ex. xix. 4; Deut. xxxii. 11; Ps. xxxvi. 7. The eagle is God Himself, and its wings are His wings. On these wings the woman flies into the desert, into her place, *i.e.* the place of ver. 6, the place already prepared for her, and where, though in the desert, she shall be secure. What is good, what is Divine, has not in this world its Canaan. It is still in the wilderness, but it is preserved there by the loving care of the Most High.

In this place she is **nourished.** The reference is probably to the history of Elijah, who was nourished first at the brook Cherith and then at Zarephath during the three years and a half when there was no rain; but it may be also to the extraordinary means by which God sustained His people in the wilderness, not by natural supplies of food, but by the manna, the water, and the flesh with which He miraculously provided them.—This is done for **a time, and times, and half a time**, or for three years and a half,—the whole period

of the militant condition of the Church in a present world.

Vers. 15, 16. The imagery employed in these verses is difficult. It is in all probability taken from the passage of Israel across the Red Sea and the river Jordan into the Promised Land. This reference is the more probable when we remember the language of David in Ps. xviii., when at ver. 4 he first declares that 'the floods of ungodly men' (emissaries of Satan, persecutors) made him afraid, and then at vers. 15–17 compares his deliverance to the passage of Israel through the Red Sea. With this may be mixed the thought of the history of Korah and his companions, when men who had envied Moses and risen against him in a formidable insurrection were destroyed by the earth's opening her mouth (Num. xvi. 32). The symbol is of God's protecting care of His people. In the day of their trial He will provide for them a way of escape.

Ver. 17, and chap. xiii. 1A. Defeated in his purpose the dragon breaks forth into a paroxysm of rage. The important expression in this verse, **the rest of her seed**, is difficult, and it has been very variously interpreted. These interpretations it is impossible to examine, and it must suffice to say that 'the rest of her seed,' as appears from the immediately following description of their character, can only mean that portion of the woman's seed which remained faithful to its trust. They are 'the saints' of chap. xiii. 7. We have here, in short, one of those anticipatory indications, like that of the measuring in chap. xi. 1, of a separation between the Church as a whole and a part of the members, between the vine as a whole and its fruit-bearing branches, which prepare us for the further manifestation of this mystery in later chapters of the book. The expression 'the rest' seems to correspond to the 'remnant' referred to by St. Paul in Rom. ix. 27, xi. 5, and it is used in Rev. ii. 24 in a similar sense.

The first great enemy of the Church has been described. One thing more is necessary that, ready for the conflict, he shall take up his position on the field. Accordingly it is to be observed that the first clause of chap. xiii. 1 ought to form a part of the last verse of this chapter, and that the true reading of the clause is not that of the Authorised Version 'I stood' but 'he stood' or 'took his stand.' The dragon **took his stand upon the sand of the sea**, upon the margin of that 'earth' and 'sea' in which he finds his prey (ver. 12).

CHAPTER XIII. 1B–10.

The Second great Enemy of the People of God

1 AND I saw a beast rise[1] up out of the [a]sea, having seven heads and ten horns,[2] and upon his horns ten crowns,[3]
2 and upon his heads the[4] [b]name[5] of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a [c]leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon [d]gave him his power, and his seat,[6] and great
3 authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to[7] death; and his deadly wound[8] was [e]healed: and all the
4 world[9] wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which[10] gave power[11] unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, [f]Who *is* like unto the beast? who
5 is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a [g]mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him[12] to continue [h]forty *and* two months.
6 And he opened his mouth in [i]blasphemy[13] against God, to blaspheme his name, and[14] his tabernacle, and them that
7 dwell[15] in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to [k]overcome them: and [l]power was

[a] Ch. xvii. 8; Dan. vii. 2.
[b] Ch. xvii. 3.
[c] Dan. vii 4–6.
[d] Mat. iv. 9.
[e] Ch. v. 6.
[f] Ps. cxiii. 5.
[g] Dan. vii. 8, 20, 25.
[h] Ch. xi. 2.
[i] 2 Thes. ii. 4.
[k] Mat. xxiv. 24.
[l] Dan. vii. 23.

[1] coming [2] ten horns and seven heads [3] diadems [4] *omit* the
[5] names [6] throne [7] as though it had been slain unto
[8] his death stroke [9] and the whole earth [10] because he
[11] his authority [12] and there was given unto him authority
[13] for blasphemies [14] *omit* and [15] tabernacle

given him [16] over all [17] kindreds,[18] and [19] tongues,[20] and nations.[21]
8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose
names are [22] not written [22] in the book of life of the Lamb [m] Ch. iii. 5, xx. 15, xxi. 27.
9 slain [23] from the [24] foundation of the world.[24] If any man have [n] Eph. i. 4.
10 an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into [o] captivity shall go [o] Jer. xv. 2.
into captivity: [25] he that killeth [26] with the [p] sword must be [p] Mat. xxvi. 52.
killed with the sword.[27] Here is the patience and the faith of
the saints.

[16] and there was given unto him authority [17] *omit* all [18] every tribe
[19] *add* people and [20] tongue [21] nation
[22] every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world
[23] that hath been slain [24] *omit* from the foundation of the world
[25] If any one is for captivity into captivity he goeth
[26] if any one shall kill [27] with the sword must he be killed

CONTENTS. The twelfth chapter has set before us the first great enemy of the Church. This chapter introduces us to other two by means of whom the devil or Satan carries on his warfare against the truth. The first is described in vers. 1-10; the second in vers. 11-17.

Ver. 1. **A beast is seen coming up out of the sea.** The word of the original translated 'beast' has occurred only once before (at chap. vi. 8), and is wholly different from that which, to say nothing of many other passages, meets us no fewer than seven times in chap. iv. alone; and which, rendered in the Authorised Version by the same term, ought to be translated 'living creatures.' The 'living creatures' are symbolical of all that is noble and admirable, of all deep and true spiritual life; the 'beast' represents whatever is most violent and repulsive. It is not simply a beast but a wild beast, unrestrained in its fierce and destructive rage. This beast is beheld in the act of ascending out of the sea,—a circumstance which explains the order of the words in the next following clause, where, according to the true reading, the 'horns' are mentioned before the 'heads,' because they rise first above the surface of the water. In chap. xvii. 3, when the beast has risen, the heads are mentioned first.—By the 'sea' we are not to understand the ocean everywhere embracing and surrounding the land. The word has its usual symbolical sense, and denotes the nations of the earth, the whole mass of the ungodly. The beast not only rules over them, it springs out of them and is their native king. Although not expressly stated, there can be no doubt that this beast comes up from the sea at the call of the dragon (who had stationed himself for this purpose upon the shore, chap. xii. 18), in order to serve him and be his vicegerent among men.—**Having ten horns and seven heads**; the same number of both as the dragon had (chap. xii. 3); the order only, for the reason already spoken of, being different. It is a question how we are to think of the distribution of the horns. The probability seems to be that they are all connected with the seventh head, for in Dan. vii. 7, which gives us the groundwork of the representation, they belong to the fourth beast alone, and at chap. xvii. 11, 12, where the figure before us is interpreted, it is said that the ten horns are ten kings receiving their power along with the beast who had been spoken of as the 'eighth.' The beast before us is thus at no early stage of its progress. In the true spirit of prophecy we are invited to behold it in its final and completed form.—**And upon his horns ten diadems**, emblems of royalty. Comp. chap. xvii. 12 'the ten horns are ten kings,' and chap. xix. 12 where He who is described as 'King of kings and Lord of lords' has upon His head 'many diadems,' 'tokens of the many royalties—of earth, of heaven, and of hell (Phil. ii. 10)—which are His' (Trench, *Syn.* i. p. 92).—**And upon his heads names of blasphemy.** No indication is given what the names were. The fact, however, that they were upon the heads is important, for there can be little doubt that we have in this a mocking caricature of the name borne upon the forehead of the high priest, and transferred in this book to Christ's faithful people (comp. chaps. ii. 17, vii. 3, xiv. 1).

Ver. 2. The description of the 'beast' is continued. The three animals, the **leopard**, the **bear**, and the **lion**, some of whose parts it possessed, are the first three 'great beasts' of Dan. vii. 4-6, although they are here introduced in a different order, and are combined into one. The qualities represented are the most offensive of their kind, the swift cruel spring of the leopard, the brutish relentlessness of the bear, and the devouring power of the lion.—**And the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.** Three things are mentioned; first, the power itself; secondly, the position from which it is exercised; and thirdly, the right to use it. They are the things which Christ had been offered by the dragon, but which He had refused (Matt. iv. 9). They are now accepted by the beast at the expense of becoming the dragon's slave and sharing its fate. It is probable that St. John has the Temptation in the wilderness as described by the earlier Evangelists in his eye.

The question as to the precise meaning of the first beast has perplexed inquirers, and very various opinions in regard to it have been entertained. There is indeed an almost general agreement that it is a symbol of worldly antichristian power. But by some this power is supposed to be that of heathen Rome, in which case the seven heads become the seven hills upon which Rome was built, or seven of its emperors. Others add the

idea of Papal to that of heathen Rome, in which case the seven heads become seven forms of Roman government—Kings, Consuls, Decemvirs, Tribunes, Dictators, Emperors, Popes: while others again understand by the seven heads seven kingdoms which, either in the Bible or in Christian history, oppress and persecute the Church of God,—the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, Roman, together with the Germanic-Sclavonic kingdoms by which the downfall of Rome was followed. The point is of great importance, especially for the interpretation of chap. xvii.; and the following remarks may be made:—

1. The numbers seven and ten must, as elsewhere, be regarded as symbolical, as expressing the idea of fulness or completeness rather than the mere value belonging to them in the numerical scale. We are not, therefore, entitled to make an arbitrary selection from the worldly powers opposed to the Church of God, and to use it as simply illustrative of the nature of these powers in general. Our selection, if made at all, must be made in such a manner that it shall embody the idea of *completeness*. 2. The rule symbolized by the power of the beast must be a rule over the *whole* world. The dragon of chap. xii. rules it all, and not merely a part of it (chap. xii. 9): his vicegerent the beast must do the same. We learn from ver. 7 of this chapter, and from its fourfold division of 'tribe and people and tongue and nation,' that he actually does so. It is to be remembered, too, that the description given us of the power of the beast is a mocking caricature of the power of Christ, and His rule is universal. 3. The objects represented by the heads of the beast must be *kingdoms*, not personal kings like the Emperors of Rome. Such is the sense in which the word 'kings' is used both in the Book of Daniel and in the Apocalypse, where there is nothing in the context to compel us to think of personality (comp. Dan. vii. 17, 23; Rev. xvii. 2, xviii. 3), and the seven heads are said in chap. xvii. 10 to be seven 'kings.' Apart from this it may be observed that no seven Emperors of Rome can be a fitting representation of the *whole world-power*. They might represent the power of Rome, but that is not enough to meet the necessities of the case with which we deal. 4. It will hardly be denied that the seven heads must severally and individually bear a similar relation to the Church of God, for it is in relation to that Church that the beast is viewed; but no seven Emperors of Rome did so. They were not all persecutors: under some of them the Church enjoyed peace. 5. We may conclude from analogy that the objects, whatever they may be, lying at the bottom of the series of seven are taken either from what was before the Seer at the moment, or from his acquaintance with the past. 6. But, if so, chap. xvii. 10 at once affords us the point from which to start. There we are informed that five are fallen and 'one is,' *i.e.* 'is' at the time when St. John lived and wrote. This can be no other than the Roman power; and, counting backwards from it, we have the Greek, the Medo-Persian, and the Chaldean for three of the five. The two earlier, still counting backwards, are the Assyrian and the Egyptian. These two last-mentioned powers are often named together in the Old Testament as enemies of God's people, 'I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria' (Zech. x. 10); 'and it shall come to pass in that day, that they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem' (Isa. xxvii. 13). We have thus six of the 'heads,'—Egypt, Assyria, Chaldæa, Persia, Greece, Rome,—all of which had successively been opponents and persecutors of the Church of God. The seventh, resolvable into the ten horns, is no one definite kingdom. It had not yet arisen: but St. John saw that the wicked Roman Empire was tottering to its fall, and that it would be dissolved in other and final world-powers represented in their totality by the number ten. The 'beast' before us is thus the symbol of the world-power in its absoluteness and universality. Yet it is not identical with the world-power in any one of its seven single and successive forms. It is rather the essence of that power as it appears to a certain extent in each form. In this respect it is really the 'Little Horn' of Dan. vii. 8, before which 'there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots,' in order that it might take their place. This characteristic, however, is not yet brought out; it will meet us in chap. xvii. 11. Finally, we may remark that, in so far as the power of Rome enters into the description, it can only be that of Pagan, not Christian, Rome. Even in her darkest days Christian Rome could not have been fitly represented by one of the heads of the beast.

Ver. 3. **And I saw one of his heads as though it had been slain unto death; and his death-stroke was healed.** The rendering alike in the Authorised and Revised Versions of the Greek word which we have translated 'slain' (in the one 'wounded,' in the other 'smitten') is peculiarly unfortunate and objectionable. The word occurs eight times in the Apocalypse. In seven of these it must be translated 'slain,' or 'slaughtered,' or 'killed.' How can it be otherwise translated here? The statement in the verse is the counterpart of that in chap. v. 6, where we read of the 'Lamb as though it had been slaughtered.' In both cases there had been actual death, although in both there had also been a revival, a resurrection, to life. The one is a mocking counterpart of the other. The Seer does not tell us to which of the seven heads he specially refers, but a comparison of the words now used by him with those of chap. xvii. 8-11 seems clearly to show that the sixth head, or the Roman power, was in his eye.

The language before us, it will be observed, is thus utterly inconsistent with the idea entertained by so many in modern times, that the sixth head, instead of being the Roman power in general, is the Emperor Nero himself, regarding whom the rumour is said to have prevailed, that after his death he would return to life and revive all the horrors of his former reign. It is extremely doubtful whether such a rumour was in existence at the time when the Apostle wrote. The thought would seem rather to have arisen long afterwards, when the misinterpretation of this passage gave it birth. Even Renan admits that 'the general opinion was that the monster (Nero), healed by a Satanic power, kept himself concealed somewhere and would return' (*L'Antechrist*, p. 350). The form which the belief assumed was not that Nero had died, but that he had hidden himself in the wilds of Parthia,

from which he would come again to strike terror into the world. This being the case, there are at least two important points on which the statement of the passage before us is directly at variance with that rumour. In the first place, the head of the beast spoken of had not simply disappeared from view: it had been actually slain. A death-stroke had been inflicted. It had died as really as the Lamb of God had died on Calvary, and the Seer saw that it had done so. The words 'as though' before 'it had been slain' no more imply that there had not been a real death than they imply this in chap. v. 6, where they are used of the slain Lamb. In the second place, this head was not to revive at some future day. It had already revived, and its death-stroke had been already healed. In order, therefore, to make the story of Nero's disappearance and reappearance constitute the foundation of the passage before us, it is necessary to suppose that the prevalent rumour was that that monster of iniquity had both died and risen from the dead; and neither particular was embraced by it. What is spoken of is the world-power in the form of its sixth head. That power received a mortal stroke by the work of Christ. The world was then ideally and really overcome. It revived, and resumed its working. —**And the whole earth wondered after the beast.** The words 'the whole earth' cannot be understood to mean only the Roman people. They must be allowed their full force, and thus they afford a further proof that in the 'beast' we have a representative of the general world-power. See a fuller discussion of the Nero hypothesis in note on ver. 18.

Ver. 4. This verse contains a parody of the ascriptions of praise given to the true God in many passages of the Old Testament (Isa. xl. 18, 25, xlvi. 5; Ps. cxiii. 5, etc.). If the words apply to Nero they must apply to Nero *redux*, for it is unnecessary to spend time in showing that it is to the beast *as healed, and not before it was slain*, that the song is raised (comp. especially chap. xvii. 8). But there is not a tittle of evidence to prove that homage of this kind was paid even to the thought of the resuscitated tyrant. The acclamations with which he had been received by the citizens of Rome, when he returned from Campania his hands red with the blood of his murdered mother, belong to a period before his death, and afford no indication of the feelings with which he was regarded after that event. It is true that some even then cherished his memory and decked his tomb with flowers. But, as invariably happens when a tyrant dies, the sentiment of the masses underwent an immediate and profound revulsion. Suetonius tells us that 'the public joy was so great upon the occasion that the people ran up and down with caps upon their heads' (*Nero*, chap. 57). Horror rather than admiration filled their breasts.

Ver. 5. **And there was given him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.** This is the first of three things spoken of (vers. 5–7) as 'given,' *i.e.* given by God to whom in its utmost might the beast is subject. The description is taken from Dan. vii. 8, 20, 25, where similar language is used of the 'Little Horn.' The second thing 'given' is **authority to work forty and two months.** For the time here specified see on chap. xi. 2.

Ver. 6. In this verse the blasphemies of ver. 5 are more particularly described.

Ver. 7. The third thing is 'given;' and the **authority** is universal, the whole world being marked out by the four departments into which it is divided.

Ver. 8. **And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him.** These dwellers upon the earth are in contrast with those who 'tabernacle in heaven.' They are the ungodly as distinguished from the godly; and again they are not confined to the Roman Empire, but include all who anywhere worship the beast.—**Every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the lamb that hath been slain.** The plural of the first clause of the verse, 'all,' passes into the singular of the second clause, those referred to being now looked at individually (comp. John xvii. 2, vi. 37).—The connection of the last clause is doubtful. It may be joined, as in the Authorised Version, with the 'Lamb that hath been slain;' but chap. xvii. 8 seems to determine in favour of connecting it with the word 'written.' Besides which, the clause is less appropriate to the slaying of the Lamb, *an act* which took place in time, than to those counsels of the Almighty which are from eternity.

Ver. 9 contains a solemn call to listen, and is best connected with what follows.

Ver. 10. **If any one is for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any one shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed.** In a climax of two clauses consolation is afforded to the righteous amidst all their trials. There is a *lex talionis* in the dealings of God. They who lead His people into captivity, they who kill them with the sword, shall experience a similar fate.—**Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.** For surely there is enough to nerve our patience and to stimulate our faith in the thought that 'God judgeth in the earth,' and that it is a righteous thing with Him 'to recompense tribulation' to them that trouble His people.

CHAPTER XIII. 11–18.

The Third great Enemy of the People of God.

11 AND I beheld[1] another beast coming up out of the earth;
and he had [a]two horns like a [b]lamb, and he [c]spake as
12 a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power[2] of the first beast
before him, and causeth[3] the earth and them which dwell
therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly[4] wound[5] was
13 healed. And he doeth great [d]wonders,[6] so[7] that he maketh[8]
[e]fire come[9] down from[10] heaven on[11] the earth in the sight
14 of men,[12] and[13] deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of*[14] those miracles[6] which he had power[15] to do in the
sight of[16] the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth,
that they should make an [f]image to the beast, which had the
15 wound by a sword,[17] and did live.[18] And he had power[19] to
give life[20] unto the image of the beast, that the image of the
beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would[21]
16 not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he
causeth all, both[22] small and[23] great, rich and poor,[24] free and
bond,[25] to receive[26] a [g]mark in[27] their right hand, or in[28] their
17 foreheads:[29] and[30] that no man[31] might[32] buy or sell, save he
that had[33] the mark, or[34] the name of the beast, or the number
18 of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a
[h]man; and his number *is* Six hundred threescore[35] *and* six.

[a] Ch. xi. 3. [b] Ch. v. 6. [c] Mat. vii. 15.
[d] Mat. xxiv 24; 2 Thes. ii. 9. [e] Ch. xi. 5; 2 Kings i. 10–12.
[f] Col. i. 15, iii. 10; Heb. i. 3.
[g] Cp. ch. xiv. 1.
[h] Ch. xxi. 17.

[1] saw [2] authority [3] he maketh [4] *omit* deadly
[5] death-stroke [6] signs [7] *omit* so [8] that he should even make
[9] to come [10] out of [11] into [12] before men [13] *add* he
[14] by reason of [15] it was given him [16] before
[17] which hath the stroke of the sword [18] rose to life
[19] And it was given unto him [20] breath [21] should [22] the
[23] *add* the [24] and the rich and the poor [25] and the free and the bond
[26] that there be given them [27] upon [28] on [29] forehead
[30] *omit* and [31] one [32] should be able to [33] hath
[34] even [35] and sixty

CONTENTS. The passage upon which we now enter describes the third great enemy of God's people, and closes with the mysterious indication of the number of the beast.

Ver. 11. **And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth.** This is the third great enemy of the saints, the second 'beast.' It is characterized by the same general term as the second enemy or the first beast; and although therefore, as afterwards mentioned, it resembles a lamb, this in no degree diminishes the fierceness of its nature. It is still a 'beast.' It comes up not out of the 'sea' like the first beast, but out of the 'earth.' The contrast between the 'sea' spoken of in ver. 1 and the 'earth' now mentioned makes it impossible to refer the latter to any one particular portion of the world, such as the Asiatic Continent, or even to the whole world itself, or to human society and its progress, or to earthly thinking and willing. The true meaning of the term must be sought in that distinction between the Jews and all other nations by which Scripture is pervaded. The 'sea' represents the latter: the 'earth' the former,—yet not the former simply as a nation. The 'sea' is the nations as opposed to God. The 'earth' is the Jews, as God's prophetic and priestly people. That this beast comes up out of the earth is therefore a token that it springs out of a religious, not a secular, source; and this trait corresponds, as we shall see, to the whole description of it.—**And he had two horns like a lamb.** The lamb-like form of

the horns can only be a travesty of the seven horns of 'the Lamb' spoken of in these visions (chap. v. 6); and the number two is not to be understood literally. Like the 'two' of the two witnesses in chap. xi. 3, the number is symbolical, and denotes all who are animated by the spirit of this lamb. The number two, therefore, does not 'complete the similarity' to the animal in its 'natural condition,' nor does it show that its power is 'much less' than that of The Lamb, because two is less than seven. It rather connects with this beast an element of persuasiveness. There may even perhaps be a reference to the two false witnesses of Matt. xxvi. 60, who came against our Lord. The like enemies will come against His people. The religious element again appears in the lamb-like horns.—**And he spake as a dragon.** The first beast does not speak: the second does. It is not said that the words spoken are religious; but, when we remember how often the word 'spake' of the original is used of Christ in the Fourth Gospel, and that it denotes not so much an occasional remark as formal and continuous discourse, we can hardly be wrong in seeing here again a travesty of our Lord. The beast professed to teach religious truth; but his mode of teaching was fierce and murderous, the very opposite of that of Him who did not strive nor cry aloud, neither did any one hear His voice in the streets (Isa. xlii. 2; Matt. xii. 19).

Ver. 12. **And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast before him.** The words 'before him' are to be connected with 'exerciseth;' and they are again a travesty of that 'before God' which we find predicated of the Son, of the Spirit, and of the saints (chaps. iii. 5, i. 4, vii. 15, etc.). This second beast is 'before' the first, in his presence, sustained by him, ministering to him, doing his pleasure (comp. chap. viii. 2, where the seven angels are described as standing 'before God').—**And he maketh the earth . . . whose death-stroke was healed.** The word 'worship' leads us directly to the thought of religious service, and therefore to that of the religious persuasion by which it is secured.—The description of the first beast given in these words is highly important—'whose death-stroke,' or 'the stroke of whose death,' was healed. We have here an unmistakeable description of the first beast, not as he appeared in the earlier stages of his manifestation under the first five heads, but as he appeared under the sixth, *after he had been slain and had risen to life.* Let us allow that St. John gave credit to the rumour that Nero *would return*, could he have supposed that he *had returned?*

Ver. 13. **And he doeth great signs that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven into the earth before men.** The 'great signs' are again a symbol of what is done by *false prophetical and priestly* power. The 'fire out of heaven' is explained by the function of this beast. He is to direct men to the worship of the first beast in whom the Satanic power of the dragon is personified. As therefore Christ, in whom the power of God is personified, is preceded by Elias, who is to direct men's eyes to Him, so the first beast has in the second his Elias, who travesties the miracle of the ancient prophet (2 Kings i. 10–12).

Ver. 14. **And he deceiveth,** etc. The word 'deceiveth' again leads us to the thought of false teaching (Matt. xxiv. 24, etc.).—**Saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beast which hath the stroke of the sword, and rose to life.** The difficult expression 'image of the beast' occurs ten times in the Apocalypse, xiii. 14, 15 (thrice), xiv. 9, 11, xv. 2, xvi. 2, xix. 20, xx. 4. It is to be explained by the help of Gen. i. 26; Rom. viii. 29; 1 Cor. xi. 7, xv. 49; Col. i. 15, iii. 10; Heb. i. 3. Comparing these passages, the thought of the Seer appears to be as follows—First, we have God, the Son the true 'image' of God, and man 'renewed' in the Son 'after the image of Him that created him.' Secondly, we have the first beast or the world-power in all the ungodliness of its spirit, that spirit supposed to be incarnated in its 'image,' and men so created after that image that they may be said to be 'of their father the devil' (John viii. 44). The second beast or the false prophet will then stand in the same relation to the first beast and men as that in which Christ the true prophet stands to God and men. It may indeed be said that, were this view correct, we ought to read that men *are made* after the image of the beast, whereas what is really said is that they '*make*' the image. But, according to the constant teaching of St. John, men who are made make. They love the darkness; they choose the evil; their will is active not passive in the matter. There is no ground for the idea that in the image made to the beast we have an allusion to those statues of the Roman Emperors which some of the basest of them set up for worship. 'Image' in its Scripture sense expresses something living. It would be far more natural to seek the 'image' in the Emperors themselves.

Ver. 15. In the words of this verse the second beast is still further characterized as giving **breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed.** These words are commonly understood to refer to the lying wonders of pagan priests in making pictures and statues appear to speak; to which many add 'the moving images and winking and speaking pictures so often employed for purposes of imposture by their far less excusable papal successors.' But such pictures and images, however they might seem to move and speak, were never able to put to death. It seems better, therefore, to think first it may be of the persons in whom civil power was centred, of the possessors of the world power, of kings or emperors in any land, but especially in Rome, who demanded that Divine honours should be paid them, and who persecuted to the death such as refused the homage. These may be first thought of, but after them come all who, having any worldly power, are persuaded to use it against the saints of God. To them the second beast gives 'breath,' making them bring it about that they who worship not the image of the first beast, and are not to the incarnate spirit of the world what believers are to their Lord, 'should be killed.'

Ver. 16. The **mark** is originated by 'the beast,' that is, by the first beast, but is imposed at the instigation of the second. At the same time, however, it must be noticed that it is freely accepted by those who receive it (comp. chap. xiv. 9), and that, probably for the purpose of bringing out this, the word 'give' is used. The

Son freely receives what is given Him by the Father, the devil what is given him by God, the beast what is given him by the dragon, the adherents of the beast what is given them by the beast. The 'mark' itself is the travesty of that impressed by God as His seal upon His own (chap. vii. 2). It is made upon the 'right hand or upon the forehead,' the former being that part of the body upon which soldiers, the latter that upon which slaves, received their mark. The followers of the beast own the beast as their captain and serve it as its slaves. What the precise nature of the mark was we are not informed, although from the following verse it would appear to have been either the name of the beast, or the number by which that name might be expressed. From chap. xiv. 1 it would seem that the 'Father's name' was the mark imprinted upon the followers of the Lamb.

Ver. 17. The meaning of this verse can only be that the second beast aimed at denying a part in the intercourse of life, or the rights of citizenship, to every one who refused to acknowledge the supremacy of the first.

Having considered the particulars mentioned in these verses, we have now to ask what is denoted by this second beast, or third great enemy of the saints. In doing so it is necessary to call to mind the leading principle which seems to lie at the bottom of the apocalyptic conception of the Church's struggle. We have already had various illustrations of it, and more will meet us as we proceed. That principle is simply this, that the struggle of the Church is the counterpart of the struggle of Christ Himself. The Church is one with her Lord, is appointed to carry on His work in the world, is exposed to the same trials, and is destined to achieve the same victory. The enemies who rise against her are therefore substantially the same as those with which Jesus had to contend. Keeping this in view, we ought to have little difficulty in determining the meaning of the second beast. It was with three great enemies that the contest of Jesus was carried on, and by them His sufferings and death were brought about. These were the devil, the power of the heathen world, and the spiritual wickedness of the Jews. The two former have already been set before us in the dragon and the first beast. The last mentioned is the second beast. It is not worldly wisdom, or learning, or science, or art; not increasing civilisation, or the power of intellectual cultivation, even when most refined and spiritual. A fatal objection to all such views is that they not only draw no sufficient distinction between the first and the second beast, but that they fail to recognise the essentially *religious* character of the latter. Upon this point the indications of the passage are too numerous and precise to be mistaken. The second beast exercises its power not through the sword but through the word and signs. The lamb-like form of the horns reminds of Jesus the great Teacher and Prophet of His people. The speaking as a dragon takes us to the thought of those false teachers who come in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves (Matt. vii. 15). The 'great wonders' done by it are an obvious allusion to the words 'There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect' (Matt. xxiv. 24); while at the same time we are reminded by its whole appearance of that antichrist, whose coming 'is according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders' (2 Thess. ii. 9). Add to all this that the second beast is expressly styled the 'false prophet' in other passages of this book (xvi. 13, xix. 20, xx. 10), and the conclusion appears to be incontrovertible, that it represents to us no mere secular or worldly, but a distinctly religious and antichristian, spirit. Further, this spirit is clearly in the first instance Jewish, for the second beast rises up out of the 'land,' not like the first out of the 'sea,' and the land is the emblem of Judaism, as the sea is of heathenism. More even may be said; for the action of the second beast corresponds precisely to that of the fanatical spirit of Judaism in the days of our Lord. It was 'the Jews' who stirred up the power of Rome against their true King;—it was they who 'exercised all the authority of the first beast before Him;' they who by their cry 'We have no king but Cæsar' made an 'image to the beast;' and they who gave 'life unto the image of the beast,' that it should both 'speak and cause as many as would not worship it to be killed.' Circumstances such as these lead directly to the belief that the fundamental spirit of this second beast is that of a degenerate Judaism in its most bigoted, fanatical, and antichristian form,—that spirit which stirred up the Roman power against our Lord, which in after times was so often the means of unsheathing the sword of the civil magistrate against Christians, and which, down to our own day, has been ever working as a spirit of enmity and persecution to all that claims for the religion of Christ the immediate presence of the Divine.

At the same time we are not to imagine that this spirit of degenerate Judaism is to be found only in those who are Jews by birth. In the Fourth Gospel the spirit of 'the Jews' is looked upon as that which most truly and fully exhibits the irreligious spirit of the world. The same is the case here. The spirit and rule of the second beast are as wide as those of the first. 'The Jews' were men. Their nature was human. They exhibited the preference shown by human nature in every age for the seen above the unseen, for the outward and formal above the inward and spiritual. In this beast, therefore, although we have first the spirit displayed by them, we have also embodied that irreligious spirit which, especially in the Church, has no toleration for the unworldliness of the children of God. Tolerant of all else, it would here threaten and persecute and kill. The friend of the world is the enemy of God. Finally, the remark must be made, that this second beast is to be sought within rather than without the professing Christian Church.

Ver. 18. At this point the Seer pauses, and we meet those words which have been so great a puzzle to the Church of Christ in all ages of her history. **Here is wisdom.**—The test of wisdom is then set forth in the following clause: **He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred sixty and six.** 'It is the number of a man,' that is, the number of the name of the beast is one which, when transferred according to the fashion of the time into the letters designating them, will give the name of the beast. 'The number is six hundred sixty and six,' that is, it is a number which consists of

three numerals, the lowest 6; the second 6 multiplied by 10, or 60; the third 60 multiplied by 10, or 600. 'Let him count the number of the beast,' that is, let him note or weigh carefully the import of these three numerals.

To treat the point now before us with anything like the fulness which it deserves is unfortunately out of the question. The limits of this commentary forbid the attempt. Instead, therefore, of endeavouring either to examine the various interpretations that have been given of the verse, or to trace the history of the inquiry, we shall confine ourselves as much as possible to one interpretation which seems to have been first proposed half a century ago by several German scholars (Fritzsche, Benary, Hitzig, Reuss, etc.; see Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, new edition, vol. ii. p. 846) who each claimed to have discovered it, and which has of late been accepted as an unquestionable solution by not a few who have paid most attention to the subject and are best entitled to be heard. If we succeed in showing that this particular solution is untenable, we shall not only determine one point at least to which, in its bearings on the Apocalypse as a whole, too much importance cannot be attached, but we shall, in doing so, indicate the lines upon which it appears to us that a solution must be sought. The interpretation to which we refer understands the number 'six hundred and sixty and six' to represent the words 'NERON CÆSAR.' The argument is that, when written in Hebrew characters, the letters of these words stand as follows: NRON KSR, and that, taken according to their numerical value in the Hebrew alphabet, they supply the following figures: 50+200+6+50+100+60+200, or in all 666. The conclusion is obvious, and the 'beast,' alike of our present passage and of chap. xvii., can be no other than the Emperor Nero, the foulest monster that ever stained the page of history with deeds of cruelty and lust and blood. We believe that this solution is mistaken, and we offer the following considerations in connection with it.

(1) Every inquirer allows that the 'beast' spoken of is not the second but the first beast of the chapter. Sufficient attention, however, has not been paid to the fact that a distinction must be drawn between that beast in itself and in each of the various forms in which it was manifested under its successive 'heads' (comp. on ver. 2). Properly speaking, the beast itself is no one of these heads singly. It is rather the concentrated essence of them all (comp. on chap. xvii. 11). Whatever of evil there is in each of them flows from it, and must be restored to it when we would form a true conception of what it is. We know it only fully when, gathering into itself every previous element of its demoniacal power, it is about to exert its last and fiercest paroxysm of rage before it goes 'into perdition' (chap. xvii. 8). By the confession even of those against whom we contend it is 'the eighth' mentioned in chap. xvii. 11; it is 'of the seven,' and yet it is so far to be distinguished from them. That this is the correct view of 'the beast' in the present chapter as well as in chap. xvii. is clear, not only from the fact that the beast is spoken of as distinct from any one head, and from the impossibility of interpreting chaps. xiii. and xvii. unless we suppose the beast of both chapters to be essentially the same, but also because in vers. 14–17 of this chapter we have the *whole* work of the second beast in its service, as well as its own work, set before us as *fully and finally accomplished*. 'The beast,' therefore, to which our attention is here called, cannot be Nero, for, even on the supposition that the seven 'heads' of chap. xiii. 1 or the seven 'kings' of chap. xvii. 10 were personal kings and not, as we have already shown, kingdoms, it must be more than any separate individual of the series. (2) The interpretation makes it necessary to have recourse to the letters of the Hebrew instead of the Greek alphabet. But the improbability that St. John had Hebrew letters in his mind is very great. He writes in Greek. On other occasions he employs the letters of the Greek alphabet in order to give, by means of letters, an expression to his thought (chaps. i. 8, xxi. 6, xxii. 13). When he uses the Hebrew he expressly notifies that he does so (chaps. ix. 11, xvi. 16; comp. John v. 2, xix. 13, 17, xx. 16). Few things are more certain than that the Christians of Asia Minor, for whom he wrote, had little or no acquaintance with Hebrew. It is urged indeed that the Seer resorted to the Hebrew alphabet for the sake of more effectually concealing a name the disclosure of which might have been attended with danger. The assumption is wholly gratuitous. The obvious intention of the Seer is not so much to conceal as to reveal the name, although in a manner that shall illustrate its solemn import. He is dealing, in short, not with a human puzzle but with a Divine mystery, the most essential conditions of which would have been destroyed had he concerned himself about the half-concealed name of an individual. Nor, if his object be to avert danger from the Christian Church, is he consistent with himself. It will not be denied that if the numbers before us point to Nero, the words of chap. xvii. 9, 18 point to Rome, and in that case a city, the naming of which must have been as dangerous as the naming of its Emperor, could not have been designated with greater clearness. (3) It is only by force that the letters of the Hebrew alphabet can be made to accomplish the end for which they are referred to. The names of Ewald and Renan stand at the very head of Semitic scholarship in Europe, and neither scholar can be suspected for a moment of any leaning towards the traditions of the Church. Yet both of them have pronounced it almost, if not altogether, impossible to believe that the words Nero Cæsar could in the first century have been spelled in the way demanded by the proposed solution. The former, accordingly, first inserts an additional letter in the KSR, then substitutes Rome for Nero, and lastly obtains the number 616 (of which we have still to speak) instead of 666 (*Johann. Schrift.* ii. p. 262). The latter, agreeing with Ewald as to the spelling but not as to the number represented, gives it as his explanation that the author of the Apocalypse has 'probably of design suppressed the additional letter in order that he may have a symmetrical cypher.[1] With that letter he would have had 676' (*L'Antechr.* p. 416). It is surely too much to expect that men shall readily receive an explanation so heavily encumbered. (4) Another circumstance has yet to be noted which has been adduced by a well-known and influential writer of the day in the following words:—'If any confirmation could possibly be

[1] The Hebrew word for Cæsar was spelled in the first century not by the letters KSR but by KISR.

wanting to this conclusion (that afforded by the reference to Neron Cæsar), we find it in the curious fact recorded by Irenæus, that in some copies he found the reading 616. Now this change can hardly have been due to *carelessness*. But if the above solution be correct, this remarkable and ancient variation is at once explained and accounted for. A Jewish Christian, trying his Hebrew solution, which would (as he knew) defend the interpretation from dangerous Gentiles, may have been puzzled by the *n* in Neron Kesar. Although the name was so written in Hebrew, he knew that to Romans, and Gentiles generally, the name was always Nero Cæsar, not Neron. But Nero Kesar in Hebrew, omitting the final *n*, gave 616, not 666; and he may have altered the reading because he imagined that, in an unimportant particular, it made the solution more suitable and easy' (Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 298). At first sight the argument is plausible, but it breaks down on the fact that the ancient father to whom we owe our earliest information as to the reading 616 instead of 666 knew nothing of the proposed explanation. Although himself offering conjectures at the time as to the meaning of the mysterious symbols, he makes no allusion to either Neron Cæsar or Nero Cæsar; and, after mentioning one or two solutions, he concludes that St. John would have given the name had he thought it right that it should be uttered. It is a curious fact, illustrating the little importance to be attached to the argument under consideration, that the father to whom we refer preferred another rendering Teitan (T=300, E=5, I=10, T=300, A=1, N=50, in all 666), from which, if we drop the final *n*, we get Teita, numbering 616, and a better representation than Teitan of the Emperor Titus by whom Jerusalem was overthrown. When we find therefore that, notwithstanding the desire to penetrate into the meaning of the enigma which marked the early Church, this solution was not discovered, we have a proof that the discovery has been made by a false process, and is worthless. (5) We venture to ask whether in conducting this discussion sufficient attention has been paid to St. John's use of the word 'name,' and to the precise manner in which he makes the statement of this verse. In all the writings of the Apostle the 'name' of any one is much more than a designation by which the person receiving it is identified. It marks the person in himself. It tells us not only who he is but what he is. It has a deep internal signification; and importance belongs to it, not because the name is first attached to a person and then interpreted, but because it has its meaning first, and has then been affixed, under the guidance of God, to the person whose character or work it afterwards expresses. Keeping this in view let us carefully note the manner in which the statement of this verse is made. It is not the *name*, it is the *numbers* that are emphatic—not the name deduced from the numbers, but the numbers deduced from the name. Upon these numbers we are mainly to fix our eye. But there must be a bond of connection with the name deeper and stronger than the bare fact that the numbers were yielded by it. Familiar as the writer shows himself to be with the method of transposing letters and numbers then in vogue, he must have known that *many* names would yield the number 666, probably quite as many as the long list which swells the history of the interpretation of this text. Of what use would it have been merely to call attention to this? The questions would instantly arise, Which is the true solution? Wherein is one name so given better than another? There must be some additional element in St. John's thought. Let us endeavour to discover it by making the supposition that he had been dealing with the human name of the Redeemer, 'Jesus' He cannot fail to have known that the letters of that name in Greek give the number 888 (ι=10, η=8, σ=200, ο=70, υ=400, ς=200), but many other names must also have done so. What would lend peculiar importance to the fact that the correspondence existed in the name of Jesus? The combination of two things does it; first, the meaning of the figures; secondly, the meaning of the divinely-bestowed name. The two correspond; behold the expression of the Divine will! The figure 8 had a Divine meaning to the Jew. It was upon the 8th day that circumcision, the initiatory act of a new life, was performed. The 8th day was 'the great day' of the Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 37). What in Matt. v. 10 is apparently an 8th Beatitude is really the beginning of a new cycle in which that character of the Christian which had been described in the seven previous Beatitudes is thought of as coming out in such a manner before the world that the world persecutes. Upon the 8th day our Lord rose from the grave, bringing His Church with Him to her true resurrection life. But the name 'Jesus' has also a Divine meaning (Matt. i. 21). In the very spirit of this passage St. John might have spoken of 'the number of the name' of Jesus as eight hundred, eighty, and eight. As it is, he is occupied with one who, in his death, resurrection, and second coming, is the very counterpart of our Lord. He has a 'name,' a character and work, the opposite of Christ's. That name may be translated into numbers yielding 666. Ominous numbers! falling short of the sacred 7 to the same extent as the eights went beyond it; associated too with so much that had been most godless and impious in Old Testament history. The nations of Canaan had been 6 in number (Deut. xx. 17). The image set up by Nebuchadnezzar, and for refusing to worship which the three companions of Daniel were committed to the fiery furnace, had been sixty cubits high by six cubits broad. The weight of gold that came to Solomon every year, in token of the subjection of the heathen nations around him, had been 666 talents (1 Kings x. 14; 2 Chron. ix. 13). On the sixth day of the week at the sixth hour, when Jesus hung upon the cross, the power of darkness culminated (Matt. xxvii. 45). What dread thoughts were connected with such sixes! The argument then is,—these numbers correspond to the name of the beast when its meaning, otherwise known, is taken into account. Both tell the same tale; behold how God expresses Himself regarding it! Now for all this the words Nero Cæsar were utterly useless. The second of the two words might have a meaning, but the first was meaningless. It was simply the name of an individual. Merely to count up the numerical value of the figures obtained from Nero Cæsar would not have answered the apostle's purpose, and could never have filled his mind with the awe that is upon him in this verse.

These considerations seem sufficient to show that the mere equivalence of value between the letters of Nero's name (as of many other names of that and every following age)[1] and the number 666 is no proof that the Roman tyrant is mysteriously indicated. When we add to this some of the other points previously spoken of, more especially that the beast is before us in its complete development, and that the homage it receives is paid to it as a beast that had died and risen from the dead (facts never asserted of Nero at that time), we are justified in concluding that the whole Nero theory will most probably prove but an illustration of the manner in which exegetical, not less than other, fancies have their periods of temporary revival as well as decay.

It is scarcely necessary to allude to an interpretation of an altogether different kind which has found favour with many, and which depends on the form rather than the numerical value of the figures. Written in letters rather than in words the figures 666 are the following χξ′,—the first the initial letter of the name of Christ, the last the first double letter of the Greek word for cross, in the middle the twisted 'serpent.' There is nothing inconsistent with the ideas of the time in what may appear to be only too fanciful to be true. It is a sufficient argument against it that the verse which we have to explain was addressed to the ear rather than the eye.

All other proposed solutions may be omitted. We have confined ourselves to that which is by far the most plausible, and the consequences of which, could it be established, would undoubtedly make this verse the keystone of apocalyptic interpretation. Our readers, we believe, will not ask more. It will be noticed, too, that we have indicated, in what has been said, the most important condition to be fulfilled by any solution which is to obtain general acceptance. The 'name' of the beast represented by the figures must have itself a meaning expressive of the beast's position or character or work. Only if this were the case could the coincidence of its name with its number be of consequence to those who were to learn from it.

[1] Among the names which have at different times been suggested may be mentioned the following:—Lateinos, Emperor of Rome, Cæsar Augustus, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, Mohammed, Luther, Calvin, Beza, Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon III. These with a little gentle manipulation by no means unfaithful to the names are all found to yield the number 666 (see Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, 1883, vol. ii. p. 841). Another name has been recently suggested by a French writer who makes it Nimrod, son of Cush, in Hebrew letters.

CHAPTER XIV. 1–5.

The Lamb upon Mount Sion with His 144,000.

1 AND I looked,[1] and, lo,[2] a[3] Lamb stood[4] on the mount
Sion, and with him an [a] hundred forty *and* four thousand, [a] Ch. vii. 4.
2 having his Father's[5] name[6] written in[7] their foreheads. And I
heard a voice from[8] heaven, as the[9] voice of many waters, and
as the[9] voice of a great thunder: and I[10] heard[11] the voice of
3 harpers harping with their harps: and they sung[12] as it were
a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts,[13] and
the elders: and no man[14] could learn that[15] song but[16] the
hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which[17] were redeemed[18]
4 from[19] the earth. These are they which were not defiled with
women; for they are [b] virgins. These are they which follow [b] 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 25–27.
the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed[20]
from among men, *being*[21] the[22] first-fruits unto God and to[23]
5 the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile:[24] for[25]
they are without fault[26] before the throne of God.[27]

[1] saw [2] behold [3] the [4] standing
[5] *omit* Father's [6] *add* and the name of his Father [7] on
[8] out of [9] a [10] and the voice which I [11] *add* was as
[12] sing [13] living creatures [14] one [15] the
[16] save [17] *omit* which [18] even they that had been purchased
[19] out of [20] purchased [21] omit *being* [22] a
[23] unto [24] lie [25] *omit* for [26] blemish
[27] *omit* before the throne of God

CONTENTS. The three great enemies of the people of God have been set before us, and we might expect the last struggle to begin. So terrible, however, are the judgments about to fall that we must be specially prepared for them. This preparation is made by the visions of the present chapter.

Ver. 1. **First the Lamb is seen standing on the mount Sion.** It is the same Lamb that we have already met with at chap. v. 6,—the once crucified, but now risen and glorified, Lord. The 'mount Sion' is neither the literal Sion at Jerusalem, nor the Christian Church, but simply the most appropriate place for the people of God to occupy, the holy mount, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. The scene of preservation is not heaven but earth.—**And with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.** These are the sealed of chap. vii., not one lost. True, they are not spoken of as the 'sealed.' In chap. vii. they were so described, for their preservation was there the prominent thought. Now that they have been preserved and admitted as priests within the veil, our attention may be directed to the contents of the seal. These are in part at least—it is not necessary to think wholly—the 'name' which belongs at once to the Father and to the Lamb, the name LORD. St. John, as his manner is, is loftier than St. Paul, who says, 'Ye are the Lord's' (Rom. xiv. 8).

Ver. 2. **A voice is heard out of heaven.** The description of it shows that it is a voice of mingled terror and sweetness.

Ver. 3. The song referred to is not said to be sung by the 144,000, and perhaps we ought to think simply of a great body of praise going up before the throne. **And no one could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, even they that had been purchased out of the earth.** They are described as 'purchased out of the earth,' a designation which, like that of ver. 4, 'from among men,' must be accepted in a general sense, there being nothing to suggest the idea of Judaism alone. The word 'earth' rather leads us to the thought of our natural condition as sons of Adam (Gen. iii. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 47, 49).

Vers. 4, 5. **These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.** The description is in three clauses each beginning with the word 'These.'

(1) 'They are virgins'—not all of them literally so—for the 144,000 represent the whole multitude of the redeemed. Nor on the other hand, only in the sense that they had kept themselves pure from idolatry, for the temptation to actual idolatry belongs only to particular ages of the Church. They were 'virgins' in the sense in which St. Paul speaks of the whole Church at Corinth (2 Cor. xi. 2). Even those who had entered into marriage, the closest of earthly ties, had learned to keep it in subordination to the will of Christ; 'those that had wives were as though they had none' (1 Cor. vii. 29).

(2) **These are they which follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth.** As the first clause contained the negative, the second contains the positive, aspect of their life. The word for 'goeth' is important. It is not simply 'whithersoever he moveth about;' and still less can it be referred to the following of the Lamb to favoured localities in the heavenly mansions. The 144,000 are still on earth. The verb used is that by which Jesus in the Fourth Gospel so often denotes His 'going' to the Father, including both His death and His glorification. The 144,000 follow Him to the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension (comp. John xxi. 22). This is their *character*. The tense of the verb 'follow' is not that of present time merely, it is descriptive of a state.

(3) **These were purchased from among men, a first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish.** The third characteristic of the 144,000 describes the glory of their position. For the force of the words 'from among men,' see on ver. 3. The term 'first-fruits' may seem to imply that the persons spoken of are a *selection* from the great body of the redeemed. Were it so, the term would be inappropriately used; for in the view of those who introduce the idea of selection we are dealing with Christians at the end, not at the beginning, of the Church's history. Besides which, the term seems to correspond with that of 'the elect' in Matt. xxiv. 31, where all the elect must be meant. In Jas. i. 18, too, we meet the word in a similar sense. The 144,000 are a 'first-fruits' in relation not to the remaining portion of believers but to all the creatures of God.—The 'lie' spoken of is not simply the opposite of veracity, but of truth of character and life as a whole (comp. Ps. cxvi. 11; John viii. 44; 1 John ii. 21; Rev. xxi. 27).—That they are 'without blemish' reminds us of Jesus Himself (1 Pet. i. 19). They are a faultless and acceptable sacrifice to God, because they are offered up in Him who 'did no sin,' and in whom the Father was always 'well pleased.'

CHAPTER XIV. 6–20.

Preparatory Visions (continued).

6 AND I saw another angel fly[1] in the[2] [a]midst of heaven,[3] [a] Ch. viii 13.
having the everlasting[4] gospel to preach unto[5] them that
[b] dwell[6] on the earth, and to[7] every nation, and kindred,[8] and [b] Ch. iv. 1.

[1] flying [2] *omit* the [3] mid-heaven [4] an eternal
[5] to proclaim over [6] sit [7] over [8] tribe

7 tongue, and people, saying with a loud [9] voice, Fear God, and
give glory to him; for the [c] hour of his judgment is come: and [c] Dan. iv. 33.
worship him that [d] made [10] heaven, and [10] earth, and the [11] sea, [d] Ch. viii. 6-12.
8 and the [11] fountains of waters. And there followed another
angel,[12] saying, [e] Babylon [13] is fallen, is fallen, that great city,[14] [e] Ch. xvii. 5.
because she made [15] all [16] nations [17] drink of the wine of the
9 [f] wrath of her fornication. And the third angel [18] followed [f] Isa. li. 17; Jer. xxv. 15.
them, saying with a loud [19] voice, If any man worship [20] the
beast and his image, and receive [21] *his* [22] mark in [23] his forehead,
10 or in [24] his hand, the same [25] shall drink of the wine of the wrath
of God, which is [26] poured out [g] without mixture into [27] the cup [g] Prov. i. 24-32.
of his indignation; [28] and he shall be tormented with [29] fire and
brimstone in the [h] presence of [30] the holy angels, and in the [h] Ch. xi. 12.
11 presence of [30] the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment
ascendeth [31] up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day
nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever
12 receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the [i] patience of the [i] Ch. xiii. 10, xix. 9.
saints: here *are* [32] they that keep the commandments of God,
13 and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from [33] heaven
saying unto me,[34] [k] Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in [k] Ch. i. 11, 19, xix. 9, xxi. 5.
the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may
rest from their labours; and [35] their works do [36] follow them.[37]
14 And I looked,[38] and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud
one sat [39] like unto the [40] [l] Son of man, having on his head a [l] Ch. i. 13.
15 golden crown, and in his hand a sharp [m] sickle. And another [m] Joel iii. 13.
angel came out of [41] the temple, crying with a loud [42] voice to
him that sat on the cloud, thrust in [43] thy sickle, and reap: for
the time [44] is come for thee [45] to reap; for the [n] harvest of the [n] Jer. li. 33; Mk. iv. 29.
16 earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle
17 on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel
came out of [46] the temple which is in heaven, he also having a
18 sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar,
which had [47] power over fire; [48] and cried [49] with a loud cry [50] to
him that had the sharp sickle, saying, [o] Thrust in [51] thy sharp [o] Joel iii. 13.
sickle, and gather the clusters of the [p] vine of the earth; for her [p] Deut. xxxii. 32; Jer. ii. 21; Ezek. xv. 6.
19 grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into
the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into

[9] great [10] *add* the [11] *omit* the [12] *add* a second,
[13] *add* the great [14] *omit* that great city [15] which hath made
[16] *add* the [17] *add* to [18] And another angel, a third,
[19] great [20] worshippeth [21] receiveth [22] a [23] upon
[24] on [25] he also [26] *omit* which is
[27] the poured-out unmingled wine in [28] anger [29] in [30] and before
[31] goeth [32] *omit* here *are* [33] out of [34] *omit* unto me
[35] for [36] *omit* do [37] with them [38] saw [39] sitting
[40] a [41] from [42] great [43] send forth
[44] hour [45] *omit* for thee [46] from [47] he that hath
[48] the fire [49] he called [50] great voice [51] Send forth

20 the great [q] wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine- [q] Isa. lxiii. 1–3.
press was trodden [r] without the city, and blood came out of the [r] Heb. xiii. 12.
wine-press, even unto the [s] horse bridles,[52] by the space of [53] a [s] Zech. xiv. 20.
thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.

[52] bridles of the horses [53] as far as

CONTENTS. The visions contained in these verses are of the same preparatory character as the preceding vision. The structure of the passage is remarkable. It will be observed that it consists of seven parts, each part except the fourth, which in a series of seven is always the central and most important, being introduced by an angel (see vers. 6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18). In the fourth part, at ver. 14, we have the central figure of the movement, described exactly as in chap. i. 13, 'one like unto a Son of man.'

Ver. 6. The angel referred to in this verse cannot be reckoned another with reference to any angels previously mentioned, for in vers. 8 and 9 we read of the 'second' and 'third' angel by whom he is followed, thus making this the first. He is simply therefore 'another,' because he introduces a new series of angels. He flies in mid-heaven (comp. viii. 13), for his voice is to reach over the whole earth. He has an eternal gospel to proclaim, usually understood as the Gospel of glad tidings now to be proclaimed for the last time to a sinful world. If, however, this be the meaning, it seems unaccountable that the article should be omitted. The word 'Gospel' must therefore be understood in the same sense as 'prophesying' in chap. x. 11.

Ver. 7, which gives the proclamation, confirms this view; the description in ver. 6 of those to whom it is made does so too; and the very preposition following the verb in the original implies something peculiar in the mode in which the tidings are proclaimed. It is not 'the eternal Gospel' of Christ, then, that is spoken of, but the condemnation which alone remains for those by whom that Gospel has been despised and rejected (comp. on chap. xv. 6). These persons are described in a twofold manner. First, they sit (not 'dwell') on the earth. The word 'sit' may appear unsuitable to the idiom of the English language, but it ought to be employed, as alone bringing out the meaning of the original. Not the inhabitants of the earth in general are alluded to, but those only who have made the earth their *throne*. Secondly, they are gathered together in the four terms which denote universality, every nation and tribe and tongue and people.

Ver. 7. The angel now utters his cry, Fear God, and give glory to him, because the hour of his judgment is come. The 'fear' and the 'giving glory' spoken of are those of unbelief and hardness of heart (comp. chap. xi. 13). On the word 'hour' comp. Dan. iv. 33. There is no 'great era of Christian missions' here. — And worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters. For the 'worshipping' of God spoken of comp. on chap. xv. 4.

Ver. 8. And another, a second, angel followed. He is second to the angel in ver. 1.— Saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The proclamation is simply anticipatory of what is to be more fully described hereafter. Till we come, therefore, to that description (chap. xviii.) it may be well to defer inquiry into the meaning of the word 'Babylon.' In her ungodly influence Babylon is spoken of as making 'all the nations to drink,' etc. (comp. Jer. li. 7). A third angel follows.

Ver. 9. And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice. It is curious to meet here again the 'great voice' which is met in connection with the first angel, but not with the second. The circumstance is perhaps to be accounted for by the tendency of St. John to return at the close of a series of events to the beginning. In the next series of three, extending from ver. 15 to ver. 20, the same structure is found, a 'great voice' being there attributed to the first and third angels, but not to the second.— If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark upon his forehead or on his hand. Such is the cry of the third angel as he proclaims judgment to all the followers of the beast. These we have already met at chap. xiii. 16. In the description the order of the two words 'forehead' and 'hand' is changed, but the construction of cases is the same.

Ver. 10. He also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, the poured out unmingled wine in the cup of his anger. The punishment of such is now described in four particulars, the number four being perhaps taken because it is the ungodly world with which we are dealing, and because it is a *lex talionis* that is illustrated. The first of the four particulars corresponds to ver. 8, and shows that we have before us essentially the same spirit as that there referred to. The wine is said (literally) to be 'mingled unmingled;' but there is no play upon the words, for, owing to the practice of the ancients to mingle water with wine, the verb to mingle had come to be used in the simple sense of pouring out. Enough that the wine of the wrath of God is now 'unmingled;' the day of grace is past.—And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone before the angels and before the Lamb. The second of the four particulars presents us with the final punishment of hell (comp. chaps. xix. 20, xx. 10, xxi. 8; Gen. xix. 24).

Ver. 11. And the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever. The third of the four particulars of their miserable doom, which is unto ages of ages, that is, 'for ever.'—And they have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. This is the fourth and last particular in the delineation of their misery, which is not only everlasting, but uninterrupted while it lasts. Can we fail to mark the contrast to the 'no rest day nor night' of the four living creatures in chap. iv. 8? In their 'receiving'

the mark it is implied that there is voluntary action on the part of the followers of the beast.

The first three angels have now fulfilled their message and, before we come to the Judge Himself, there is a pause. Two sayings are introduced.

Ver. 12. **Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.** The first of the two sayings is an encouragement to the faithful afforded by the fact that God will execute His judgments upon the ungodly in the way which has been described (comp. chap. xiii. 10). We have in this a further proof that the whole proclamation of the three angels has been one of judgment, not of mercy, or of judgment and mercy combined. The construction of the two clauses is important, as there can be no doubt that the second contains a fuller description of the 'saints' mentioned in the first (comp. chap. xx. 4).

Ver. 13. **And I heard a voice out of heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.** Those that 'die in the Lord' are obviously in contrast with the followers of the beast spoken of in ver. 11, and the verb used in the original, not 'fall asleep' but 'die,' seems to imply the thought of the troubles and persecutions in the midst of which they died. The verb is several times used of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel; and the words 'in the Lord' here added to it may be intended to denote that the death referred to was such a death as His. The expression therefore does not bear that sense of quiet falling asleep in Jesus which we generally assign to it. It rather brings out the fact that in Him His people meet persecution and death; and that, although they are not all actually martyrs, they have the martyr spirit.—'From henceforth.' What is the time to which these words point? Is it the moment when the harvest of the earth is to be reaped? In that case we must connect them with 'Blessed,' while they are obviously connected with the verb 'die.' Yet we cannot speak of dying after the 'harvest.' It seems better, therefore, to understand the words as referring to the beginning of the Christian age, and onward to the end (comp. Matt. xxvi. 64). During all that time the 144,000 are being gathered in amidst the temptations of Babylon and the opposition of the beast. To the faithful during all that time, therefore, the consolation of these words is given; and their meaning is, that they who 'die in the Lord' are 'blessed,' not because at death they enter into the *immediate* possession of the heavenly reward (a point upon which no direct information is afforded), but because they are set free from the difficulties and trials and sorrows which, were they left here to continue the struggle, they would have to meet. Instead of being longer troubled they enter into rest (comp. 2 Thess. i. 7). Hence accordingly the following words.—**Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, for their works follow with them.** Those who thus die are blessed because 'they rest from their labours;' they have that rest from toil and suffering which they cannot obtain here below. And how comes it that *they* thus rest? Because their 'works (an entirely different word from 'labours') follow with them.' Their Christian character and life, giving them a meetness for the rest, follow *with* them. They enter into heaven fitted for its joys.

Ver. 14. It has been already stated that the chapter now under consideration divides itself into seven parts, the first three introducing to us three angels (vers. 1–13), the last three doing the same (vers. 17–20). Vers. 14–16 thus constitute the fourth or leading passage of the seven. It is the centre of the whole chapter, and its very position thus prepares us for the transition that we make in it from angels to the Lord Himself. What is first seen is a **white cloud**, the cloud upon which Jesus is elsewhere represented as coming in order to wind up the history of the world (Matt. xxiv. 30, xxvi. 64). Upon this cloud is seen **one sitting like unto a Son of man**, a description which can leave no doubt upon the mind that it is the Lord (comp. chap. i. 13). Nor is it in any way inconsistent with this that He who sits upon the cloud receives a commission from an angel (ver. 14). That angel delivers a message from God (comp. Dan. vii. 13, 14). The 'Son of man' wears a crown of victory. He went out to conquer (chap. vi. 2): He now returns as a conqueror. The sickle is for reaping.

Vers. 15, 16. The fourth angel of the chapter now appears, and cries **with a great voice to him that sat upon the cloud** that **the hour is come to reap.** The message is from God, for the Son knows not the hour Himself (Mark xiii. 32; comp. Acts i. 7), and no sooner is the message heard than the Divine will is recognised and obeyed: **the earth was reaped.** The angel it will be observed performs no part of the act of reaping. That act is performed wholly by Him that 'sat on the cloud.' At ver. 19 it will be different. The question is interesting and important, Whether we are to understand by this harvest the ingathering of the righteous alone (thus separating it by a broad line of distinction from the vintage which immediately follows) or a general reaping of the wicked as well as of the good. The analogy of Scripture as well as the mode in which the passage before us is conceived point distinctly to the former view. The good are alone the true 'harvest,' the wheat gathered into the garner. At John xiv. 3 Jesus comes for His own, while at Matt. xiii. 41 the angels gather in the wicked to their fate.

Ver. 17. In this verse the second of the second group of three angels appears. He also has a sharp sickle like that of the Person mentioned in ver. 14. But he is not on that account to be identified with Him—he only carries out His will. The sickle too is to be used for another purpose, there for reaping, here for gathering the vintage.

Ver. 18. The third of the second group of three angels comes not merely from the temple, but **out from the altar**, the most sacred part of it—that altar over which the angel stands who presents the prayers of the saints to God, and who casts its fire upon the earth (chap. viii. 3–5). It is this **fire**, not fire in general, that is referred to when the angel is described as **he that hath power over the fire.** The fire is the judgments of God upon the earth.—The angel next cries to him that had the sharp sickle that he should **gather the clusters of the vine of the earth.** As in ver. 16 we were told only of the harvest of the good, so here we are told only of the vintage of the wicked. The figure is often used in the Old Testament (comp. Isa. lxiii. 1–4; Joel iii. 13).

Ver. 19. The vintage is described. Not merely the grapes but **the vine of the earth** itself is

gathered, the vine being wholly rooted out according to the words of the Lord, 'Every plant which My Heavenly Father planted not shall be rooted up' (Matt. xv. 13). After this the vine is cast into **the great winepress of the wrath of God.**

Ver. 20. **And the winepress was trodden without the city.** In the words 'without the city' we can hardly fail to see another instance of the *lex talionis:* our Lord had suffered 'without the gate.'—**And blood came out of the winepress even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.** The juice of the grape here passes into the reality, blood, which it was intended to represent (comp. Isa. lxiii. 1-3). It is difficult to say what may be the exact meaning of the first part of the description of the great sea of blood—that its depth was 'to the bridles of the horses.' There is nothing to suggest the idea that the horses represent the 'chiefs of the people.' Commentators generally abandon such an interpretation, but substitute none of their own, occupying themselves rather with the inquiry, whether these horses are those of the angels of chap. ix. 15 or those of the host that come up to the destruction of Jerusalem. May the words of Zech. xiv. 20 supply the needed explanation, 'In that day shall there be upon the bells (bridles) of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD'? The thought of the Seer may be that the blood could not be so deep as to touch these holy words. The extent of the sea of blood is less difficult to determine. We may at once dismiss the idea that it is taken from the superficial area of the Holy Land or of the old territories of the Pope, or that the expression denotes simply 'great extent.' We must start from the fact that we have to deal with a judgment by which the *whole ungodly world* is overtaken, and that four is the number of the world. This number is first squared for completeness, and then multiplied by 100, a number, as we have seen, belonging to the wicked, while 1000 belongs rather to the good. Thus we have $4 \times 4 \times 100$, representing the whole surface of the earth, wherever the ungodly are to be found.

CHAPTER XV. 1–8.

The Angels with the Bowls.

1 AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous,
seven angels having the [1] seven last [2] plagues; [3] for in
2 them is filled up [4] the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a
[a] sea of glass [5] mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the
victory [6] over [7] the [b] beast, and over [7] his [c] image, and over his
mark, [8] *and* over [7] the [d] number of his name, stand on the sea of
3 glass, [9] having the [10] harps of God. And they sing the song of
[e] Moses the servant of God, and the song of the [f] Lamb, saying,
Great and [g] marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty;
4 [h] just [11] and true *are* thy ways, thou King of [i] saints. [12] Who
shall not fear thee, [13] O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou*
only *art* holy: for all [14] nations shall come and worship before
5 thee; for thy judgments [15] are [16] made manifest. And after
that [17] I looked, [18] and, behold, [19] the [k] temple of the [l] tabernacle
6 of the testimony [20] in heaven was opened: and the seven angels
came out of the temple, [21] having [22] the seven plagues, clothed
in pure and white [m] linen, [23] and having [24] their breasts [n] girded [25]
7 with golden girdles. And [o] one of the four beasts [26] gave unto

[a] Ch. iv. 6; Ps. lxvi. 12
[b] Ch. xiii. 1.
[c] Ch. xiii. 14.
[d] Ch. xiii. 18.
[e] Ex. xv. 1.
[f] Heb. iii. 2.
[g] Ps. cxxxix. 14.
[h] Ps. cxlv. 17.
[i] Jer. x. 7.
[k] Ch. xi. 19.
[l] Acts vii. 44.
[m] Ex. xxviii. 17; Ezek. xxviii. 13.
[n] Ch. i. 13.
[o] Ch. vi. 1, 3, 5, 7.

[1] *omit* the
[2] *omit* last
[3] *add* which are the last
[4] is finished
[5] a glassy sea
[6] and them that come victorious
[7] out of
[8] *omit* and over his mark
[9] standing upon the glassy sea
[10] *omit* the
[11] righteous
[12] the nations
[13] *omit* thee
[14] *add* the
[15] righteous acts
[16] have been
[17] these things
[18] saw
[19] *omit* behold
[20] of witness
[21] and there came out from the temple
[22] the seven angels that have
[23] clothed with a stone pure and lustrous
[24] girt round
[25] *omit* girded
[26] living creatures

the seven angels seven golden vials[27] full of the wrath of God,
8 who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with
/ smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no / Ch. xiv. 18: Ex. xl. 34, 35: Isa. vi. 4.
man[28] was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues
of the seven angels were fulfilled.[29]

[27] bowls [28] one [29] should be finished

CONTENTS. This chapter is introductory (like chaps. xii., xiii., and xiv.) to the final outpouring of the Almighty's wrath upon the enemies of His Church. In chaps. xii. and xiii. we had these enemies presented to us; in chap. xiv. we had the assurance that, formidable as they were, they should neither be able to hurt the righteous nor to protect the wicked. In chap. xv. the last ministers of the Almighty's vengeance are introduced, and we are invited to listen to the song with which they are sent forth upon their mission. The series of the Bowls opens with two visions, the first in vers. 2-4, the second in vers. 5–8, of this chapter. The Seals were introduced by no vision immediately connected with them: the Trumpets were introduced by one vision (chap. viii. 1–5). Two visions introduce the Bowls, and thus again illustrate the climactic character of this book.

Ver. 1. The **angels** spoken of have **seven plagues which are the last**; and the reason is assigned why they are so named, **for in them is finished the wrath of God.** God's last and most terrible judgments are at hand.

Ver. 2. The next thing seen is **a glassy sea mingled with fire.** There can be no reason to doubt that this is the sea already spoken of at chap. iv. 6. The difference is, that it is now 'mingled with fire,' the same fire as that of chap. xiv. 18, the fire of judgment (comp. on chap. iv. 6).—Those that occupy this sea are next described as they that **come victorious out of the beast, and out of his image, and out of the number of his name,** words in which the remarkable use of the preposition 'out of' is well worthy of notice (comp. on John xvii. 15). In the persons referred to we must include all Christians of all times who have been victorious over the three things mentioned. There is nothing to suggest the thought of a mere selection from that number.—For **the harps of God** which they hold in their hands see chaps. v. 8, xiv. 2.

Ver. 3. Not only do they harp: they mingle song with their harping.—**They sing the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying.** The epithet 'servant of God' applied to Moses awakens the remembrance of all that God did for Israel through Moses the great representative of the Old Testament Dispensation. The Lamb is not less clearly the sun and centre of the New Testament Dispensation. Or the matter may be otherwise looked at. Moses delivered men from the first head of the beast, *i.e.* under him *began* that deliverance out of a persecuting world which is *finished* in Christ. The song, therefore, includes everything that God had done for His people alike in Old and New Testament times. How clearly does it appear that the beast cannot be Nero! Only one generation, not the whole Church, could sing of deliverance from him. There is nothing to indicate that the song is similar to that of Israel at the Red Sea, Ex. xv., or to that of Deut xxxii., yet in all probability the former was in the Seer's view.—In the words of the song it seems only necessary to notice that for the reading 'king of saints' of the Authorised Version **king of the nations** is to be substituted. The change is important, as throwing light upon that aspect of the Almighty which is here thought of. Not His love towards His 'saints,' but His terror towards His enemies is celebrated. He beautifies His people with salvation, but He visits the 'nations' with His wrath.

Ver. 4. In this verse the song begun in ver. 3 is continued in the following words, **Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy? for all the nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy righteous acts have been made manifest.** The 'righteous acts' of God referred to are not such as have been exhibited alike in the publication of His Gospel and in the destruction of His enemies. The whole context imperatively requires that we shall understand them of the latter alone. If so, we are guided to the true meaning of the word 'worship' in this verse, and we have at the same time a striking illustration of the manner in which, throughout the Apocalypse (and the Fourth Gospel), we meet with a double marvelling and a double worship, that of faith upon the one hand, and of fear upon the other. It may be at once allowed that there is no passage in the Apocalypse which seems to speak so strongly of the conversion of the world as that now before us. Yet there is a 'worship' of awe, of terror, and of trembling, as well as a 'worship' of faith and love; and the whole analogy of this book (as well as of the Fourth Gospel, which in this respect most strikingly resembles it) leads directly to the conclusion, that the former alone is spoken of when the worship of the ungodly is referred to. So in Phil. ii. 10 'things under the earth' bow the knee and confess that Jesus is Lord. However, therefore, we may be at times disposed to think that mention is made in this book of the conversion of the wicked, it will we believe always appear upon more attentive consideration that nothing of the kind is really spoken of. Yet we are not on this account to conclude that the Apocalypse dooms to everlasting ruin all but the selected number who constitute in its pages the true Church of Christ. Its language appears only to be founded on that style of thought which meets us in the Old Testament when the Prophets speak of the enemies of Israel. Israel shall conquer and overthrow, but not necessarily destroy, them. Through their very subjugation they may receive a blessing. Thus may it be in the case before us. All that we urge is, that in the words of this verse judgment alone is in view. If judgment lead to penitence it is well; but the eye of the Seer does not travel so far into the future.

Ver. 5. **And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of witness in heaven was opened.** When at chap. xi. 19 the 'temple of God that is in heaven' was opened there was seen 'the ark of the covenant' reminding of mercy—here the same ark is seen, but now it is in 'the tabernacle of witness,' *i.e.* in the tabernacle containing the tables of the law by which God witnessed against Israel. At present, therefore, there is only judgment in view, and God is to take immediate part in it.

Ver. 6. **The seven angels that have the seven plagues** now issue from the **temple**, that is, from the innermost shrine of the heavenly sanctuary. Their clothing, according to the later and more correct reading of the Greek, has seemed to many to be absurd: **they are clothed with a stone pure and lustrous.** But the same idea meets us in Ezek. xxviii. 13 ('every precious stone was thy covering'), and we have already seen with how much freedom the Apocalyptic Seer employs the figures of his book (comp. on the 'white stone' of chap. ii. 17). Probably, too, it is not necessary to think of a clothing with actual stones however beaten out. The conditions may be sufficiently fulfilled by the thought of a garment covered and sparkling with precious stones (comp. chap. xvii. 4). The girding is that of chap. i. 13, so that we can hardly be wrong in supposing that priestly garments are alluded to, and that the precious stones worn by the high priest are thought of as multiplied till they constituted a garment for the whole body. The seven angels thus issue from the temple to be priests of destruction instead of salvation (comp. chap. xiv. 6).

Ver. 7. **One of the living creatures** next gives to the seven angels **seven golden bowls.** These living creatures, it will be remembered, are the representatives of redeemed creation, so that in the action here described the redeemed appear as giving the summons for the execution of judgment upon their enemies. It will be noticed that the Greek word rendered 'vials' in the Authorised Version we translate, with the Revised Version, 'bowls.' The objects so designated were not vials but those sacred bowls, rather broad than deep, in which the incense, lighted by coals from the brazen altar, was offered on the golden altar within the sanctuary. They are called 'basons' in the Old Testament. They are thus much better adapted than vials to any sudden and terrible outpouring of the wrath of God.

Ver. 8. **And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power.** This smoke is no smoke of incense, nor is it simply the thick cloud of the majesty of God. It is the smoke by which He is surrounded as the righteous Lawgiver, that which proceeds from the fire of His wrath. The figure seems to be derived from Ex. xl. 34, 35.—**And no one was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.** The meaning of these words is perhaps best to be ascertained by comparing them with Ex. xix. 21. God cannot be approached at the moment when He is revealing Himself in all the terrors of His indignation.

CHAPTER XVI. 1-21.

The Seven Bowls.

1 AND I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your[1] ways,[2] and pour out the vials[3] of
2 the wrath of God upon[4] the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon[5] the earth; and there fell a [a]noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the
3 beast, and *upon* them[6] which worshipped his image. And the second angel[7] poured out his vial upon[4] the sea; and it became as the[8] [b]blood[9] of a dead *man:* and every living soul died[10] in
4 the sea. And the third angel[7] poured out his vial upon[5] the rivers and[11] fountains of[11] waters; and they became blood.
5 And I heard the angel of the waters say,[12] Thou art [c]righteous, O Lord,[13] which art, and[14] wast, and[15] shalt be,[16] because thou
6 hast judged thus. For they have[17] shed[18] the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them [d]blood to drink; for[19]

[a] Ex. ix. 8-12.
[b] Ex. vii. 19.
[c] Ch. xv. 4.
[d] Isa. xlix. 26

[1] ye [2] *omit* ways [3] seven bowls [4] into [5] bowl into
[6] omit *upon* them [7] *omit* angel [8] *add* as
[9] *add* even the things that were [10] saying
[11] *add* the [12] *omit* O Lord [13] *add* which
[14] *omit* and [15] the Holy One [16] *omit* shalt be
[17] *omit* have [18] poured out [19] *omit* for

7 they are [e] worthy. And I heard another out of[20] the [f] altar
say,[21] Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy
8 judgments. And the fourth angel[7] poured out his vial[22] upon
the sun; and power was given unto him to [g] scorch men with
9 fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and[23] blas-
phemed the name of God, which hath[24] power over these
10 plagues: and they [h] repented not to give him glory. And the
fifth angel[7] poured out his vial upon [i] the seat[25] of the beast;
and his kingdom was full of[26] darkness;[27] and they gnawed
11 their tongues for pain, and[28] blasphemed the God of heaven
because of their pains and their sores, and[28] repented not of[29]
12 their deeds.[30] And the sixth angel[7] poured out his vial[22] upon
the great river[31] [j] Euphrates; and the water thereof was
[k] dried up, that the way of the [l] kings of the east[32] might[33] be
13 prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like[34] frogs *come*
out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the
14 beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are
the[35] spirits of [m] devils,[36] working [n] miracles,[37] *which* go forth
unto the kings of the earth and of[38] the whole world, to gather
them[39] to the battle[40] of that[41] great day of God Almighty.[42]
15 Behold, I come as a [o] thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and
keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his
16 shame. And he[43] gathered them together into a[44] place[45]
17 called in the Hebrew tongue [p] Armageddon.[46] And the seventh
angel[7] poured out his vial into[47] the air; and there came[48] a
great voice out of the temple of heaven,[49] from the throne,
18 saying, It is done. And there were[50] [q] voices, and thunders,
and lightnings;[51] and there was a great earthquake, such as
was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earth-
19 quake, *and*[52] so great. And the [r] great city was [s] divided into
three parts, and the [t] cities of the nations fell: and great
Babylon[53] came[54] in remembrance before God, to give unto
20 her the cup of the wine of the fierceness[55] of his wrath.[56] And
every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.
21 And there fell upon men a great [u] hail out of heaven,[57] *every*
stone about the weight of a talent:[58] and men blasphemed God

[e] Cp. ch. iii. 4. [f] Ch. vi. 9.
[g] Ch. i. 16.
[h] Ch. ix. 20; Ex. viii. 15; Dan. v. 22, 23.
[i] Ch. ix. 14.
[j] Jer. l. 38. [k] Ch. vii. 2; Isa. xli. 2.
[l] Lu. iv. 33. [m] 2 Thes. ii. 9.
[n] Ch. iii. 3; 1 Thes. v. 2.
[o] Judg. v. 19; 2 Kin. xxiii. 29; Zech. xii 11.
[p] Ch. viii. 5. xi. 19.
[q] Ch. xi. 8. [r] Dan. v. 28. [s] Mic. v. 11, 14.
[t] Ex. ix. 23.

[20] *omit* another out of
[21] saying
[22] bowl
[23] *add* they
[24] *add* the
[25] throne
[26] *omit* full of
[27] darkened
[28] *add* they
[29] out of
[30] works
[31] *add* the river
[32] from the sunrising
[33] may
[34] as it were
[35] *omit* the
[36] demons
[37] signs
[38] *omit* the earth and of
[39] *add* together
[40] war
[41] the
[42] God, the Almighty
[43] they
[44] the
[45] *add* which is
[46] Har-Magedon
[47] bowl upon
[48] came forth
[49] *omit* of heaven
[50] *add* lightnings and
[51] *omit* and lightnings
[52] omit *and*
[53] and Babylon the great
[54] *add* up
[55] wrath
[56] anger
[57] And a great hail as of a talent in weight cometh down out of heaven upon men,
[58] omit *every stone* about the weight of a talent

because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.[59]

[59] because great is the plague of it exceedingly

CONTENTS. This chapter is occupied with the seven Bowls, and judgment assumes its last and highest form.

Ver. 1. The voice heard is that of God, for He alone was in the temple (chap. xv. 8); and it comes from the innermost shrine. Nothing of this kind had been said at the opening of the trumpets (chap. viii. 7); and the distinction is important, for it shows us that it is not now the people of God who continue the conflict, but God Himself who acts directly for them. He takes His own cause in hand. The earth is to be distinguished from the 'sea' (comp. ver. 3).

Ver. 2. **The first** angel **poured out his bowl into the earth.** The whole earth is thought of, and no more only a third part of it as at chap. viii. 7.—**And there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast and which worshipped his image.** The idea of the plague is taken from that of Egypt in Ex. ix. 8–12, but it cannot be literally understood, for literal interpretation is wholly inapplicable to the sixth bowl, and all the bowls must be interpreted on the same principles.

Ver. 3. **The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea.** The whole sea, and not merely a part of it as at chap. viii. 8, 9, is affected by this plague. The increased potency of the plague is also shown in the description given of the blood,—not merely blood, but **blood as of a dead man,** thick, unnatural, offensive to the eye.—**Every living soul,** too, **died,** and not merely 'the third part' of the creatures that were in the sea. It can hardly be doubted that we have in this bowl a reference to one of the plagues of Egypt (Ex. vii. 19). But literal interpretation cannot be thought of.

Ver. 4. **And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters, and they became blood.** Again we see the increased potency of the third bowl as compared with the third trumpet, chap. viii. 10, 11. All rivers, etc., are affected, and they become more than bitter, they become blood.

Vers. 5, 6. **And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Thou art righteous, which art, and which wast, the Holy One.** No episode of this kind had intervened at the close of the third trumpet. But at the highest stage of judgment it is fitting that even those who suffer from it should answer that it is right. The answer is given by the 'angel of the waters,' not the angel 'who was set over the waters,' and surely not the angel who now poured out his bowl upon the waters, but the waters themselves speaking by their angel, and responding to the fact that the judgment which they have incurred is just. The ascription of praise is to God as 'righteous,' and it will be observed that He is described in three particulars; first, 'which art,' secondly, 'which wast,' thirdly, 'the Holy One.' 'Which art to come' can be no longer used, for God is come (comp. chap. xi. 17). The particular method of judgment is also commended. It is again the *lex talionis;* those who had poured out blood shall drink blood. — **They are worthy** (comp. chap. iii. 4).

Ver. 7. Not only is an acknowledgment of the righteousness of God's judgment given by the 'waters;' the martyred saints also respond. The **altar** (not as in the Authorised Version 'another out of the altar') speaks. It is the altar of chap. vi. 9 beneath which is the blood, that is the lives, of the saints. They who have suffered own that the **judgments** of the Almighty upon those who persecuted them even unto death are **true and righteous,** conformable to the realities of things and to the demands of perfect righteousness.

Ver. 8. **The fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given unto him to scorch men with fire.** We have not yet passed into a world different from that with which the previous bowls were connected. 'Men' are still plagued, though through the instrumentality of the sun which is used by the angel of judgment for this purpose, the 'fire' referred to being the scorching heat of that luminary. As compared with chap. viii. 12 there is again increased intensity of judgment, for the whole sun is affected, and not merely a third part of it; and its scorching heat, which had not there been spoken of, is now particularly noticed.

Ver. 9. **And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God, which hath the power over these plagues, and they repented not to give him glory.** The blaspheming is produced not by the last plague alone, but by the four that have been spoken of,—'plagues' not plague.—The effect is worthy of notice. There is no repentance. Those visited are the followers of the beast. They have chosen their portion; they have hardened themselves; and they are made worse by judgment.

Ver. 10. **The fifth poured out his bowl into the throne of the beast.** With the fifth bowl we pass into a different region, that of the spiritual powers of darkness. This bowl attacks the very centre of the beast's authority, and the advance from the fifth trumpet is very perceptible. There the hosts of the bottomless pit come forth to plague men. Here the king of these hosts is himself plagued. The 'throne' of the beast is no particular city, but is a symbol of the beast's general power.—**And his kingdom was darkened, and they gnawed their tongues for pain.** The Egyptian plague of darkness is the foundation of the figure. The addition of the 'gnawing of the tongue for pain' is remarkable, for the pain could not proceed from the darkness. It could come from nothing but the effects of the previous plagues. Each successive plague thus supposes those that had gone before it to be still raging. Each successive woe is added to its predecessors without the latter being suppressed. If it be so, it becomes more impossible than ever to interpret any one of these plagues literally.

Ver. 11. **And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they repented not out of their works.** Compare on ver. 9.

Ver. 12. **And the sixth poured out his bowl**

upon the great river, the river Euphrates. The sixth trumpet had related to the river Euphrates, chap. ix. 14, and the principles of interpretation necessary there are also to be applied here. The Euphrates is the river of Babylon, the seat of antichristian power, from which proceed assaults upon the people of God.—**And the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings from the sunrising may be prepared.** At the foundation of this figure of the drying up of the Euphrates may lie the drying up of the Jordan when Israel took possession of the promised land; but it is more probable that the Seer has in view that diverting of the course of this river by means of which Cyrus captured Babylon. When Cyrus is predicted as the destroyer of Babylon he is twice spoken of by Isaiah as from the East or the sunrising (Isa. xli. 2, xlvi. 11). Cyrus was indeed generally thought of by the fathers as a type of Christ, and it may be observed that, when He is first alluded to, it is in the chapter immediately succeeding that in which Isaiah prophesies of the Baptist as 'preparing the way of the Lord' (chap. xi. 3). The figure of drying up waters is one often met with in the prophets, where it is used to express the steps by which God prepares the way for the deliverance of His people and the destruction of their enemies (Isa. xliv. 27, li. 10; Jer. l. 38; Zech. x. 11). In addition to this, the words, 'that the way may be prepared,' lead us directly to the thought of the 'preparing of the way of the Lord' by the Baptist, and thus to a preparation of which the good, not the wicked, shall avail themselves. Further, this very expression, 'from the sunrising,' has already met us in chap. vii. 2, in connection with the angel who comes from that quarter with the seal of the living God in his hand; and, as it is always necessary in the Apocalypse to interpret the same expression in the same way, we are once more led to the thought not of evil but of good. This view is confirmed by another remarkable fact, that in the prophets Christ Himself is sometimes designated by the word 'The East.' Thus in Zech. iii. 8, where we read in the Authorised Version 'Behold I will bring forth my servant the Branch,' the LXX. read 'my servant the East;' so also in Zech. vi. 12; while, in Jer. xxiii. 5, 'I will raise unto David a righteous branch,' is in the LXX. 'a righteous East.' Once more, it is difficult to resist the impression that there is a contrast between these kings 'from the sunrising,' and those described in ver. 14 as 'the kings of the whole world,' who are evidently evil.

Putting these circumstances together we seem compelled to come to the conclusion that the persons described as 'kings from the sunrising' are the very opposite of what they are often interpreted to be. They are not 'the forces of rude and open evil which have been long restrained;' still less are they the princes who would fain return with a *Nero redux* for the destruction of Rome. They are representatives of all Christ's faithful ones who are not only priests but kings unto God, and for whom the waters of the Euphrates are dried up that their march to the destruction of Babylon may be easy and triumphant.

Christ's people are now gathered together as an army. But they shall not need to fight. We shall see that they do not fight (comp. chap. xx. 9). They shall rest in Christ. God shall fight His own battle. The war shall be that 'of the great day of God, the Almighty' (ver. 14).

Ver. 13. The **dragon**, the **beast**, and the **false prophet** are again before us. They are the three great enemies of the people of God who have already been described; although here we have for the first time the second beast of chap. xiii. 11 spoken of as the 'false prophet,' a designation afterwards applied to it in chaps. xix. 20 and xx. 10. The point to be chiefly noticed is that *all* the great enemies of God's people are gathered together. *All* the demoniacal powers of the world in their united forces are on the stage. **Three unclean spirits as it were frogs.** An unclean spirit comes out of the mouth of each; and the spirits are as 'frogs,' unclean, boasting, noisy, offensive animals. There may perhaps be a reference to the frogs of Egypt. The land of Egypt had 'brought forth frogs in the chambers of their kings' (Ps. cv. 30)—so does this spiritual Egypt.

Ver. 14. **For they are spirits of demons working signs.** They thus show at once their hellish origin, and the power lent them in order that they may be the better enabled to effect their end.—**Which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.** We have now the purpose for which mention of these unclean spirits is introduced. It is that Satanic might and deception may be exerted to their utmost, so that the enemies of God from all parts of the world may be led to go up to the war in which they shall be destroyed. The representation may rest upon 1 Kings xxii. 20–22, when a lying spirit goes forth to persuade Ahab to rush upon his fate. These lying spirits in like manner persuade the kings of the whole godless world to rush upon the fate prepared for them in the last great judgment of God—'His day.'

Ver. 15. The wonderful character of the great day of God, and of the issues that belong to it, leads to the interposition of this verse.—**Behold, I come as a thief.** The Lord Himself speaks, not the Seer in His name. The words are those of Matt. xxiv. 1, xxv. 1, Mark xiii. 34, Luke xii. 37, and they embrace the thought both of the suddenness of Christ's coming, and of the destruction which it brings with it to the wicked (comp. on chap. iii. 3). In the remaining words of the verse the Seer seems to take up the strain, as he pronounces blessedness upon him who is ready for the events of the day so rapidly approaching. Similar parentheses occur at chaps. xiii. 9 and xiv. 12.

Ver. 16. **And they gathered them together into the place which is called in the Hebrew tongue Har-Magedon.** The 'they' spoken of in these words refers to neither God nor the angel, but to the unclean spirits of ver. 14. These spirits had gone forth to gather together all who had submitted themselves to the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. They now accomplish their mission, but the conflict does not yet take place. The spot where the hosts assemble is mentioned only by anticipation. The battle itself is that of chap. xix. 19–21.

By the mention made of the fact that the name of the place is in the Hebrew tongue Har-Magedon, we are invited to think of the meaning of that compound term, and of the associations connected with it. There can be no doubt as to the composition of the word,—*Har*, a mountain, and *Magedon*, or Megiddon, or Megiddo, the

name of an extensive place in the north of Palestine which has been in all ages the battle-field of the Holy Land, and derived from the Hebrew verb signifying to destroy; so that, apart from any particular associations, the simple meaning of the word is 'the mountain of destruction.' In addition to this, however, we have to recall to mind two great slaughters at Megiddo mentioned in the Old Testament. The first is that celebrated in the Song of Deborah and Barak (Judg. v. 19), and again alluded to in Ps. lxxxiii. 9. The second is that in which King Josiah fell (2 Kings xxiii. 29), a fall which produced the striking lamentation described in 2 Chron. xxxv. 25, and which is afterwards referred to by the prophet Zechariah (chap. xii. 11). It is not easy to say which of these two slaughters is most probably present to the mind of St. John in the words before us. In one respect the first may seem most suitable, because there the enemies of Israel were completely overthrown. In another the second appears to be the more appropriate, owing not only to the fact that the mourning is recorded with so much pathos in 2 Chron., but that it becomes in Zechariah the type of mourning on that day when the Lord 'will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem' (chap. xii. 9). There is no improbability in the supposition that both slaughters may be in the mind of the Seer; and it is at least evident that Megiddo was a name associated with the thought of the sudden and terrible defeat of the enemies of God. In this sense then the word Har-Magedon is to be understood. No particular place either in Palestine or elsewhere is pointed at; nor is any particular event referred to. The word, like Euphrates, is the expression of an *idea*, —the idea that swift and overwhelming destruction shall overtake all who gather themselves together against the Lord. In Joel iii. 2 we have a similar use of the name 'Jehoshaphat.' The meaning of Jehoshaphat is 'God judges;' and, when the heathen are summoned to that valley, they are really summoned to meet God in judgment.

Ver. 17. **And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air.** The air is the dwelling-place of the powers of darkness, whose head is 'the prince of the power of the air.'—**And there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done.** The voice is from God, and from His very throne. The words are, 'It is done,' *i.e.* all God's purposes are accomplished: all the plagues are poured out; the end is reached.

Ver. 18. **And there were lightnings and voices and thunders.** What follows describing the end seems to be divided into seven particulars, of which this verse contains the first. The 'lightnings,' etc., are those which usually accompany the judgments of God. **The earthquake** spoken of in the second half of the verse is the second particular, and its terrors are magnified in language of much sublimity.

Ver. 19. **And the great city was divided into three parts.** In these words we have the third particular of the seven. The sentence of Dan. v. 28 may be in the Seer's mind, 'Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.' If this reference be correct, it will confirm the view (1) that Cyrus is the type from which 'the kings from the sunrising' mentioned in ver. 12 is taken; and (2) that these kings are messengers of Christ, and deliverers of His Church as Cyrus was. The city is divided into 'three' parts, not so much from any thought of the three unclean spirits as from the idea of St. John that a whole consists of three parts (but comp. also Ezek. v. 1–5, 12). The meaning is that the city was broken up and overthrown. The question of the identification of this 'great city' is more difficult. It is commonly understood to be Babylon, the emblem and centre of the world power. But in chap. xi. 8 mention has already been made of Jerusalem as 'the great city,' and it is not easy to see how we can now interpret the name in a different manner. Besides this, Jerusalem was thought of in chap. xi. 8 as the city of 'the Jews' rather than as the metropolis of God's kingdom, —the idea of the place where Jesus was crucified being afterwards extended by the mention of Sodom and Egypt (comp. on chaps. xi. 8 and xviii. 24). The 'great city' would therefore seem to be Jerusalem viewed in a less extensive sense than in chap. xi., as the principle and essence of what St. John in his Gospel calls 'the world.'—**The cities of the nations fell.** This is the fourth particular of the seven. The reference may be to Mic. v. 11, 14. There, no doubt, it is the cities of Israel in which, rather than in Himself, the people had trusted that God promises in mercy to take away. But what is a merciful chastisement to Israel is a judgment on 'the nations,' and the destroying of their only refuge. Every city they had built for themselves 'falls,' and they are left houseless and defenceless.—**And Babylon the great came up,** etc. We have now the fifth particular of the seven. 'Babylon the great' is not essentially distinct from 'the great city' of the first clause of the verse, yet it is not exactly the same. We have already seen that the latter is degenerate Jerusalem viewed in a less extensive sense than in chap. xi. Now it is viewed in its widest meaning, as embracing not only the essence and principle of 'the world' once exhibited among 'the Jews,' but that principle as it appears in the Gentile not less than in the Jew. As in chap. xi. 8 'the great city' expanded until it embraced Sodom and Egypt, so here in like manner it expands into 'Babylon the great.' As such it must drink of the cup of God's anger blazing out in His wrath.

Ver. 20. **And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.** The particular thus mentioned is the sixth, and the language used is even stronger than that of chap. vi. 14, 'and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.' The climax of judgment appears in the climax of description.

Ver. 21. **And a great hail cometh down as of a talent in weight out of heaven upon men.** The seventh particular, founded upon the thought of the plague of hail on Egypt. Each hailstone is magnified to an enormous extent. Each is a talent, or between 50 and 60 lbs., in weight. The stone descends upon 'men,' *i.e.* upon all the inhabiters of the 'earth' in its mystical sense, or upon all the ungodly.

The seven particulars of judgment are ended, and we are invited to mark the effect.—**And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because great is the plague of it exceedingly.** The 'men' spoken of are again the ungodly, nor is it possible to limit their number to that of those who survive the plague. The

writer simply looks away from the fact that those struck with so great a plague die. He thinks of them as still living, but unconverted. They blaspheme; they are hardened; and, when all that ought to convert 'men' hardens, we have a proof that the hour of final judgment is come.

CHAPTER XVII. 1–18.

The Vision of Babylon the Great.

1 AND there came one of the [a] seven angels which had the seven vials,[1] and talked[2] with me, saying unto me,[3] Come hither; I will [b] shew unto thee the judgment of the
2 great [c] whore[4] that sitteth upon many [d] waters: with whom the [e] kings of the earth have[5] committed [f] fornication, and the inhabitants of[6] the earth have been made drunk[7] with the wine
3 of her fornication. So[8] he [g] carried me away in the[9] spirit into the[10] [h] wilderness: and I saw a woman sit[11] upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads
4 and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in [i] purple and scarlet colour,[12] and decked[13] with gold and precious stones[14] and pearls, having[15] a golden [k] cup in her hand[16] full of
5 abominations and filthiness[17] of her fornication: and upon her [l] forehead *was*[18] a name written, [m] MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF[19] [n] HARLOTS AND[20]
6 ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken[21] with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I [o] wondered
7 with great admiration.[22] And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel?[23] I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that [p] carrieth her, which hath the
8 seven heads and[24] ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and [q] is not; and shall[25] ascend out of the [r] bottomless pit,[26] and[27] [s] go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names[28] were not[29] written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the
9 beast that[30] was, and is not, and yet is.[31] And[32] [t] here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven moun-
10 tains, on which the woman sitteth. And there[33] are seven kings: five[34] are fallen, and[35] one is, *ana*[36] the other is not yet

[a] Ch. xv. 1.
[b] Ch. xxi. 9.
[c] Ch. xiv. 8, xvi. 19.
[d] Ver. 15; Jer. li. 13.
[e] Isa. xxiii. 17.
[f] Ch. xiv. 8.
[g] Ch. xxi. 10.
[h] Ch. xii. 6, 14; Isa. xxi. 1.
[i] Ch. xviii. 16 Jo. xix. 2.
[k] Jer. li. 7.
[l] Ch. xiii. 16, xiv. 1, 9.
[m] Ch. xi. 8.
[n] Isa. i. 21.
[o] Jer. ii. 12, 13.
[p] Ver. 3.
[q] Ch. xiii. 3.
[r] Ch. ix. 1.
[s] Ch. xix. 20; Jo. xvii. 12.
[t] Ch. xiii. 18.

[1] bowls [2] spake [3] *omit* unto me [4] harlot [5] *omit* have
[6] and they that dwell upon [7] were made drunken [8] And
[9] *omit* the [10] a [11] sitting [12] *omit* colour [13] gilded
[14] stone [15] *add* in her hand [16] *omit* in her hand
[17] and the unclean things [18] omit *was* [19] *add* THE
[20] *add* OF THE [21] making herself drunk [22] with a great wonder
[23] wonder [24] *add* the [25] is about to [26] abyss [27] *add* to
[28] name [29] hath not been [30] how that he [31] and shall be present
[32] *omit* And [33] they [34] the five [35] the [36] omit *and*

come; and when he cometh, he must continue a [a] short space.[37] [a] Ch. xii. 12.
11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he[38] is the eighth,[39]
12 and is of the seven, and [c] goeth into perdition. And the ten
horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no
kingdom as yet; but[41] receive power[42] as kings one hour with
13 the beast. These have one mind, and shall[43] give their power[42]
14 and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the
Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of
lords, and King of kings: and they[44] that are with him *are*
15 [v] called,[45] and chosen, and faithful. And he saith unto me, [v] Judg. vii. 4; Mat. xx. 16.
The [w] waters which thou sawest, where the whore[46] sitteth, are [w] Cp. Ps. xxix. 10.
16 peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the
ten horns which thou sawest upon[47] the beast, these shall hate
the whore,[46] and shall make her [x] desolate and naked, and shall [x] Isa. xlvii. 9, 11.
17 [y] eat her flesh, and[48] burn her[49] with [z] fire. For God hath put [y] Ps. xxvii. 2; Mic. iii. 3.
in[50] their hearts to fulfil his will,[51] and to agree,[52] and[53] give [z] Lev. xxi. 9; Cp. ch. xviii. 8.
their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be
18 fulfilled.[54] And the woman which thou sawest is that[55] great
city, which reigneth[56] over the kings of the earth.

[37] while [38] *omit* even he [39] is himself also an eighth [40] *add* he
[41] *add* they [42] authority [43] they [44] *add* also shall overcome
[45] with him, called [46] harlot [47] and [48] *add* shall
[49] *add* utterly [50] For God gave it into [51] to do his mind
[52] and to come to one mind [53] *add* to [54] should be accomplished
[55] the [56] hath a kingdom

CONTENTS. A new and remarkable part of the fourth great section of the Apocalypse here opens, but one full of melancholy. We cannot enlarge upon it now before we have determined the meaning of 'Babylon.' Let it be enough to say that under the name of that city we shall find represented the degenerate Church of Christ. Notwithstanding all that has been done for her she forgets her Lord; and, in the character of a harlot selling herself to the world for hire, hastens to her fate. It may seem as if this were defeat for the cause of God. It is really victory. The true Church, the faithful remnant, is not defeated when it is constrained to leave the fold in which it has hitherto been nourished (comp. on John x.). The outward institution falls; but the voice is heard and obeyed, 'Come forth, My people, out of her' (comp. xviii. 4), and those who listen to that voice enter into rest.

Ver. 1. One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls speaks to the Seer, saying, **Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters.** The judgment spoken of, as appears by the word used in the original, is judgment executed, not in process of execution. The harlot is obviously Babylon, but the name is a mystical one (ver. 5), and the Seer will afterwards more fully explain it. 'Many waters' are interpreted by the angel in ver. 15 as 'peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues,' and the fourfold division shows that we have a representation of the *whole world*. The figure is taken from Jer. li. 13, where Babylon is addressed, 'O thou that dwellest upon many waters.'—'Sitting' is the emblem of authority and rule, accompanied by the thought of ease (comp. chap. xiv. 6).—The term 'harlot' points to the fact that this city seduced men from the true God to worldliness and sin (Isa. i. 21; Jer. ii. 20; Ezek. xvi. 15).

Ver. 2. **With whom the kings of the earth committed fornication.** 'Kings' are the representatives of all authority; and 'the earth' is the guilty world.—**and they that dwell upon the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication.** Not the kings only but all 'the inhabiters of the earth,' all who belong to the world in its evil sense, have been betrayed by the harlot. The description is again unlimited.

Ver. 3. **And he carried me away in spirit into a wilderness.** The expression 'he carried me away in spirit' is found only here and at chap. xxi. 10, where the vision of the New Jerusalem is introduced. It denotes spiritual ecstasy, not bodily removal; but it may be intended to do this in a peculiarly expressive form.—In chap. xii. 6, 14 we have been told of 'the wilderness' into which the woman there mentioned fled. Here we have no article, and we cannot therefore suppose that the wilderness now mentioned is the same. Attention is fixed simply on the fact that, amidst all Babylon's pomp and luxury, the place where she reigns is really desolate (1 Tim. v. 6). It has indeed been conjectured that the fate prepared for Babylon, and expressed by a peculiar word in ver. 16 and in chap. xviii. 17, 19, is

already in the Seer's mind, and that the thought of that fate leads to the description now given of the place of her abode. But it is more natural to think that these other expressions are conformed to that before us. The dwelling-place of Babylon is always ideally desolate: the fact shall afterwards correspond to the idea.—A description of the beast upon which the harlot sat now follows. It is obviously that of chap. xiii. 1, 2, and this may be said to be admitted. The identity is established by the whole description, especially by the comparison of the two passages relating to the beast in chaps. xiii. and xvii. with that in which it is again mentioned in chap. xix. 19, 20. In these latter verses the beast is spoken of as 'making war against Him that sat upon the horse,' and as cast alive into the lake of fire 'with the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight.' But the first of these traits belongs to the beast of this chapter (ver. 14), and the second,—its close connection with the false prophet,—to the beast of chap. xiii. (vers. 12, 13). In all three passages, therefore, we have the same beast. On the other hand, the differences are slight. In chap. xiii. 1 the names of blasphemy are upon the heads of the beast: here the whole body is covered with them. But the former statement does not exclude the latter, and the names upon the heads only are mentioned in the one place because it is of the heads that the Seer is speaking; he sees them coming up from the sea. Now he sees the whole beast. If, also, the article before the word 'names' is to be read, it carries us to the thought of specific names already mentioned, and these can be no other than those of chap. xiii. 1. Again the 'heads' of this verse are naturally mentioned before the 'horns,' whereas in chap. xiii. 1 the order was reversed, because the horns appeared first as the beast ascended from the sea. Once more, the composite character of the beast of chap. xiii. 2 may equally belong to this beast, while the colour of the beast here may equally belong to the beast there. It is the manner of the Apocalypse thus to fill out in one place the more imperfect description of the same object in another. At the same time it is not impossible that, while the beast itself is the same, some of the differences in the description may be intended to point out the effect of its alliance with the harlot. More especially may this be the case with regard to the greater extension of the names of blasphemy. How strikingly, if the harlot be the degenerate Church, would this indicate the greater and more confident rage against the saints to which the world is prompted when it finds, as it has so often found, the Church upon its side!

The attitude of the woman towards the beast, both in this verse and in ver. 7, ought to be marked. In the one she 'sits' upon it; in the other it 'carries' her: and the meaning is, not so much that her movements are facilitated by the beast, as that she is the beast's directress and guide. Without her it would simply spend itself in ungovernable and often misdirected fury. The harlot holds the reins, and with skilful hand guides the beast to the accomplishment of its aims.

Ver. 4. **And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls.** In these words we have a general description of the woman's royal magnificence (comp chap. xviii. 16). 'Arrayed' is more than adorned. She has not merely ornaments of gold and precious stones and pearls, so numerous that she sparkles with them; they are thought of as a golden and costly gilding to her (comp. chap. ii. 17).

Ver. 5. **And upon her forehead a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of the Harlots and of the abominations of the earth.** The word 'mystery' may be understood either as a part of the name, or as an intimation of the writer that the name is to be understood symbolically. The latter interpretation is to be preferred. It is hardly likely that the name should openly declare itself to be unreal. For such a use of the word 'mystery,' comp. the use of 'spiritually' in chap. xi. 8. It is worthy of notice that the word 'mystery' occurs only four times in the Apocalypse, three times in connection with the nature or the fate of Babylon (chaps. x. 7, xvii. 5, 7), and once with the seven churches which represent the Church universal (chap. i. 20). The name of the harlot is thus limited to what follows. Some would even restrict it still further. According to their view, 'Babylon the Great' was alone written upon the harlot's forehead, and the subsequent description is an explanation of the writer. The name has already met us in its shorter form in chaps. xiv. 8, xvi. 19.

It is unnecessary, in illustration of this verse, to refer to the fact that in the pagan world harlots had their names attached to their foreheads. The usage of the Apocalypse is to speak thus of the adherents both of God and of Satan—of God, see chaps. ii. 17, vii. 3, xiv. 1; of Satan, chaps. xiii. 1, 16, xix. 20, etc. More particularly the name thus borne upon the forehead is a parody of the name borne upon the forehead of the high priest (comp. chap. ii. 17; Ex. xxviii. 36). It declares the person.

Ver. 6. The description of the ungovernable fierceness of the woman's spirit is continued. She drinks, and makes herself drunk with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus (comp. chap. xviii. 24).—Having finished his description the Seer adds, **And when I saw her I wondered with a great wonder.** He is overwhelmed with astonishment at the spectacle, yet not so much probably at the royal magnificence of the woman, as that, being a woman, she should exhibit such tokens of a cruel and bloodthirsty spirit, denying the nature that properly belonged to her.

At this point it might have been well to inquire into the meaning of 'Babylon' in these verses, but so much has still to be said of that city that it seems better to delay the inquiry until we have finished the exposition of the whole passage. Upon this point, therefore, we refer to what is said at the end of chap. xviii.

Ver. 7. The angel proceeds to explain what St. John had seen, taking the two parts of the vision in inverted order; first, the beast (vers. 8–14), and secondly, the woman (vers. 15–18).

Ver. 8. **The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to ascend out of the abyss, and to go into perdition.** Whatever may be the difficulty of interpreting these words, one thing is clear, that they contain no reference to Nero or any supposed rising of his from the grave. We saw that such an interpretation was wholly inapplicable to chap. xiii. It is equally inapplicable now. In the first place, let us mark carefully

the three members of this verse, 'was,' 'is not,' 'is about to ascend,' etc. They are the obvious counterpart of the three members of the doxology in chaps. i. 8 and iv. 8, which 'was,' and 'is,' and 'is to come.' In the second place, we have to notice the words 'ascend' and 'go.' They are words almost consecrated in the Gospel of St. John to our Lord's resurrection and departure to the Father. In the third place, the word used for 'perdition' is important. It denotes the destruction prepared for the ungodly (comp. John iii. 16), a state in every particular the reverse of that heavenly and glorious life to which Jesus 'goes.' Keeping these things in view, there can be no doubt that in what is here said of the beast we have a travesty of what is said elsewhere of our Lord; and this alone compels us to think of something wider and more conspicuous than any single Emperor of Rome. We learn both from the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse that St. John is accustomed to view evil in three great stages. First, it contends against Christ and His Church; secondly, it is conquered; lastly, it breaks out again before it experiences a complete destruction. Such a course of things is exactly what we have here, 'was' representing the first period, 'is not' the second, and 'is about to ascend,' etc. the third. The evil of the world, beheld by the Seer as concentrating itself in the Roman Empire, is to him the particular form in which the beast existed in his day. Then, by the work of Jesus it was ideally destroyed (comp. Col. ii. 15). Lastly, it bursts forth again to be overwhelmed for ever. The representation is precisely parallel to that of chap. xiii. 3.—In the remaining part of the verse it is only necessary to call attention to the change of reading in the last clause, **shall be present** instead of 'yet is' of the Authorised Version. The three characteristics are the same as before, the third 'shall be present' corresponding to 'is about to ascend' of the first part of the verse. On the **name written in the book of life from the foundation of the world**, comp. chap. xiii. 8.

Ver. 9. **Here is the mind which hath wisdom.** The explanation follows. The 'wisdom' spoken of is Divine spiritual insight, gained by an experimental knowledge of the ways of God. This circumstance alone might be enough to show that, even if Rome be present to the mind of the Seer as one illustration among many of the evil before his eyes, he cannot be thinking of Rome alone. In what he is about to say, he would tell us, the thought of the seven-hilled city may most readily occur to the superficial reader. But we are not to think of it. 'Wisdom' leads to a less literal, to a more spiritual, interpretation (comp. chap. xiii. 18).—**The seven heads are seven mountains upon which the woman sitteth.** These words, it is easy to see, form the stronghold of those who think that in the 'woman' of this passage we are dealing with the city of Rome, and in the 'beast' with one of its Emperors, most probably Nero; yet it is impossible to adopt the interpretation, further at least than is involved in the admission that the thought of Rome may have been present to the mind of St. John as one, perhaps even as the most prominent, phase of a much wider truth. In the first place, the number 'seven' is not to be literally understood. There is indeed a peculiar propriety in interpreting it symbolically in the present instance, for the power described is the dark contrast of the Church, is the antichrist in opposition to the Christ. But the 'seven' churches were not literally seven, they were a symbol of the universal Church. In like manner the 'seven' mountains are not literally seven. They symbolize a seat of evil as wide as was the good,—if in the one case the one Catholic Church, in the other the one Catholic synagogue of Satan. In the second place, starting with the fact that the first clause of ver. 10 ought to be translated not 'And *there* are' but 'and *they* are seven kings,' it will be at once perceived that we cannot literally interpret the seven 'heads' first of seven 'mountains' and then of seven 'kings.' In the third place, we are told in chap. xiii. 3 that one of the seven 'heads' was wounded to death, a description which cannot apply to a literal mountain. These 'seven mountains' then are not mountains. They are an Old Testament expression for powers (comp. Isa. ii. 2; Dan. ii. 35), and we have in them the first part of a double description of the same object, first 'mountains' and then 'kings.'

Ver. 10. **And they are seven kings.** The heads are seven kings (not personal kings, comp. on chap. xiii. 2) or powers, the world-power being thus again regarded in the sevenfoldness of its unity. Every attempt to understand by these 'kings' Roman Emperors or Procurators, or Roman forms of government of any kind, is shattered either on the facts of the case, or on the extreme improbability of supposing that a book like the Apocalypse would enter into minute details of the internal government of heathen nations, or on the words actually employed by the Seer (comp. on the word 'fallen'). Nor is there any real difficulty presented by the consideration that, if one of these 'kings' be not a person but the Roman power, then this power must be spoken of in a double character as one of the heads of the beast, and as the beast itself. There is nothing to prevent this; for, as the seven churches are one, so the seven heads are one, and each head is no more than a particular and necessarily limited manifestation of evil which is wider and deeper than itself. We have already seen too (on chap. xiii. 2) that in prophetic language 'kings' means kingdoms. The seven 'kings' mentioned are therefore seven world-powers, Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Persia, Graecia, Rome, and a power which is to follow the Roman now beheld tottering to its fall.—**The five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and, when he cometh, he must continue a short while.** The word 'fallen' is worthy of peculiar notice, for it does not signify mere passing away by such a peaceful death as befell some of those Roman Emperors who are often supposed to be referred to as the 'seven kings.' The word 'is used in the Septuagint constantly, and in Daniel, of the violent fall, the overthrow, either of kings or of kingdoms: it is a word belonging to domination overthrown, to glory ruined, to empire superseded.' Thus Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Persia, and Graecia had successively 'fallen,' having perished in the 'blood that they had spilt.' The sixth, described as 'the one,' is Rome: the seventh, spoken of as 'the other,' is not yet come.

Ver. 11. **And the beast that was and is not is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition.** What is here said

is said not of a new 'head' but of 'the beast,' and this beast is to be identified with that of ver. 8. With a slight exception the description of the beast given in the two passages is precisely the same, and that exception is easily explained. It consists in the omission from the latter of the two of the words, 'and is about to come up out of the abyss.' But these words are parallel to that part of the designation of our Lord in this book which speaks of Him as 'to come,' and which was omitted in chap. xi. 17, because at that point it was no longer suitable: the Lord *was come*. The omission of the clause in the present instance is to be similarly explained. The previous and preparatory manifestations of the beast are over. It now comes itself, that it may be ready for destruction when the Lord appears. The 'beast' here is, therefore, identical with that of ver. 8; that is, with the beast as it was thought of at a time prior to any mention, in ver. 9, of the successive forms of its manifestation. It is thus distinct from any one of its seven heads. No single head may fully represent it. Thus also we see why it is described in the apparently contradictory language of this verse. First, it is 'an eighth.' Not that it is numerically an eighth in the same line with the seven. Then it would be an eighth *head*; but we are dealing with the beast itself, not with its heads, and it is spoken of as an eighth simply because it follows the seven, and because in its final condition all the malice and evil of its previous conditions are concentrated. At the same time it is possible that the Seer desires to bring out this fact in connection with the beast, that he may identify it with the 'Little Horn' of Dan. vii. 8. That Little Horn takes the place of three out of ten horns which are plucked up by the roots, that is of the eighth, ninth, and tenth horns. It thus comes after seven, is numbered eight, and represents the ungodly world-power in its highest manifestation. We have already seen that, according to Jewish methods of conception, the number eight was peculiarly fitted to express such a thought (comp. on chap. xiii. 18). Secondly, the beast is said to be 'of the seven.' The meaning is not that it is one of the seven, when it had just been said that it was distinct from them. The preposition 'of' is to be understood in its common acceptation in St. John's writings, as denoting origin, and, with origin, identity of nature. The beast is the essence, the concentrated expression, of the seven, the embodiment of their spirit; and it was necessary to mention this, lest we should think that it belongs to a wholly different category. The 'Little Horn' in Daniel was still a horn, and the great antichristian power is of the same nature and essence as the seven antichristian powers that go before it. This 'eighth' world-power is not then wholly new. It is the old world-power concentrating in itself all the rage of the seven. Thirdly, the beast 'goeth into perdition' (comp. chap. xix. 20). Nothing is said of its continuing either a longer or a shorter space. Enough that to go into perdition is at once its nature and its fate. Finally, it may be remarked that we seem to have nothing here of a personal antichrist, still less of a human king who has died and risen from the dead. We have simply the last and worst manifestation of the ungodly power of the world.

Ver. 12. The 'heads' have been explained: we come next to the **horns**. These horns are all connected with the seventh head; they are gathered together upon it, and are a substitute for it (see on chap. xiii. 1). They are now explained to be **ten kings**, *i.e.* not personal kings, but kingdoms, authorities, or powers of the world. They had not as yet received their kingdom, for the Seer has seen only the sixth head actually manifested. The historical applications of these 'ten kings' may be passed over without remark. The number is as usual symbolical, denoting all the antichristian powers of earth which were to arise after the sixth head had fallen or the great Roman Empire been broken up.—**They receive authority as kings one hour with the beast.** The expression 'one hour' can hardly occasion difficulty, corresponding, as it obviously does, to the 'short while' of ver. 10. It is more difficult to see the meaning of the words 'with the beast.' These words appear to imply that the ten kings shall have their authority *at the same time* as the beast, while it would seem from ver. 11 that the manifestation of the latter *follows* the appearance of the seventh head. The difficulty is to be resolved by remembering that each of the six powers that had been spoken of before the seventh arose has, no less than the seventh, really ruled 'with' the beast. Each of them had been a special manifestation of the beast. The preposition 'with' may imply more than contemporaneousness. On this point its use in chap. xix. 20, to say nothing of other passages, seems to be decisive. We there read not, 'and with him the false prophet' but 'and the with-him-false-prophet' or, more idiomatically, 'the false-prophet-with-him;' while we learn from chap. xiii. 12 that the relation of the false prophet to the beast is that of subordination. Here, therefore, as well as there, such subordination, such ministering to the purpose of another, is implied in the preposition 'with.' But, although the first six heads ruled with the beast and the beast ruled in them, the beast survived them; and, when they have fallen, it makes yet another effort to accomplish its purpose previous to its own total overthrow. This it does by means of the ten horns (or the seventh head) which thus rule 'with' it. These, however, are the last through which the beast shall exercise its power. They complete the cycle of seven; and, when the Lord has borne with them till the hour of judgment strikes, He will 'slay them with the breath of His mouth, and bring them to nought by the manifestation of His coming' (2 Thess. ii. 8). The meaning of vers. 11 and 12 of this chapter, then, is simply this,—that, after the fall of the Roman power, there shall arise a number of powers, symbolically ten, exhibiting the same ungodly spirit as that which had marked Rome and the powers of the world that had preceded Rome. In them the beast shall concentrate all its rage: they shall be the last and readiest instruments of its will. But it shall be in vain. The beast and they have their 'hour.' They continue their 'short while,' and then they perish.

Ver. 13. **These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast.** So had it been with the second beast (chap. xiii. 12), and so with the harlot (chap. xvii. 3, 7). The brute power of the world could of itself effect nothing were it not served by the spiritual forces of the false prophet, and of the harlot, or of the kings who have listened to the harlot's witcheries.

Ver. 14. In this verse the war of the ten kings with the Lamb is described, but it is unnecessary to dwell upon it. It may be noticed that the statement of the last half of the verse is not that of the Authorised Version, that the Lamb shall overcome because they that are with Him are called and chosen and faithful, but that **they that are with him, called, and chosen, and faithful,** shall be partakers of the victory.—The Seer now returns to the woman who sat upon the beast.

Ver. 15. The fourfold designation of those who constitute the **waters** spoken of in this verse is a clear proof that the harlot exercises her sway over the *whole world*, in travesty of Him 'who sitteth upon the flood,' who 'sitteth King for ever' (Ps. xxix. 10).

Ver. 16. **And the ten horns which thou sawest and the beast.** The ten horns and the beast are mentioned in combination because the latter is the essence of the former, and the former are the expression of the latter.—**These shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire.** What an unexpected result! The woman has been sitting on the beast, reckoning on it as her servant and ally, and guiding it in perfect harmony with its temper and designs. All at once the scene is changed. Defeat has taken place, and what is the effect? The bond which in prosperity had bound the wicked co-labourers together is dissolved, the partners in evil fall out, the one section turns round upon the other, and she who had found ready instruments in the beast and its heads for accomplishing the work to which she had spurred them on sees them, in the hour of common despair, fall upon herself and mercilessly destroy her. The individual expressions do not call for much remark: (1) **Desolate** is the word corresponding to the 'wilderness' of ver. 3,—she is to be made truly a wilderness; (2) **Flesh** is plural in the original, probably because of the many who perish, or of the many possessions that the harlot owns; (3) The thought of thus eating flesh is taken from the Old Testament; 'when the wicked came upon me . . . to eat up my flesh' (Ps. xxvii. 2); 'who also eat the flesh of my people' (Mic. iii. 3); (4) **Shall burn her utterly with fire.** The language is most probably taken from the Old Testament, in which to be so burned is the punishment of fornication on the part of a priest's daughter (Lev. xxi. 9). The whole is a picture of complete destruction.

To seek historical fulfilment of his in such events as Nero's burning Rome will appear to most men, in the simple statement of it, absurd. A great principle is proceeded upon, one often exemplified in the world,—that combinations of the wicked for a common crime soon break up, leaving the guilty associates to turn upon and destroy one another. But it is difficult not to think that there was especially one great drama present to the Seer's mind, and suggestive of this lesson—that drama which embodied in intensest action all the great forces that move the world—the drama of the life and death of Jesus. He thought of the alliance that had been made between the Jews and the Romans to crucify the Redeemer, an alliance so soon broken and followed by the destruction of Jerusalem. In that he beheld the type of similar alliances in all future time.

Ver. 17. **For God gave it into their hearts to do his mind, and to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast.** This 'giving' of authority to the beast we have already met with in ver. 13; and in ver. 12 it has been intimated that the ten kings held their authority from God. Whatever, therefore, they had done in persecuting the saints had been accomplishing God's purpose (comp. Acts ii. 23).—**Until the words of God should be accomplished**; until all His purposes should be fulfilled.

Ver. 18. **And the woman which thou sawest is the great city which hath a kingdom over the kings of the earth.** That Rome may be here present to the mind of St. John it would be difficult to deny. We have seen that Rome may have been thought of in ver. 9. But that we are to confine ourselves to Rome, either Papal or pagan or both, or that we are even to think primarily of them, as is done by different classes of historical interpreters, can hardly be admitted. Rome may be one of the illustrations or exemplifications of what is alluded to, but the idea of the Seer is certainly wider than that of any single city or power of the world. We have yet to inquire what the 'city,' the 'Babylon,' so referred to, is. In the meantime it must be enough to say that to think of any literal city whatever is to disturb the harmony which ought to mark the interpretation of the whole passage. The city must be some faithless spiritual power which, under the last manifestation of the beast, enters into a league with the world, ministers to it, and lends to its material forces an influence for evil which they would not otherwise possess.

CHAPTER XVIII. 1-24.

The Fall of Babylon.

1 AND[1] after these things I saw another [a]angel come[2] down from[3] heaven, having great power;[4] and the earth was
2 lightened with his [b]glory. And he cried mightily with a [c]strong[5] voice, saying, Babylon the great is [d]fallen, is fallen,

[a] Cp. ch. vii. 2.
[b] Lu. ii. 9.
[c] Ch. xix. 6.
[d] Ch. xiv. 8; Isa. xxi. 9; Jer. li. 37.

[1] *omit* And
[2] coming
[3] out of
[4] authority
[5] he cried with a mighty

and is become the [6] habitation of devils,[7] and the [8] hold of every foul [9] spirit, and a cage [9] of every unclean and hateful bird.
3 For all nations have drunk [10] of [11] the [e] wine of the wrath of her fornication,[12] and the kings of the earth have [13] committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are [14]
4 waxed rich through [15] the abundance of her delicacies.[16] And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, [f] Come [17] out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of [18] her sins, and that
5 ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached [19] unto [g] heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.
6 [h] Reward her [20] even as she rewarded [21] you,[22] and double unto her double according to her works: in the [i] cup which she
7 hath [23] filled fill to her double. How much she hath [23] [k] glorified herself, and lived deliciously,[24] so much torment [25] and sorrow give [26] her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen,
8 and am no [27] [l] widow, and shall see no sorrow.[28] Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with [m] fire: for
9 strong [29] *is* the Lord God who judgeth [30] her. And the kings of the earth, who have [31] committed fornication and lived deliciously [24] with her, shall bewail her,[32] and lament for her,[33]
10 when they shall [34] see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas [35] that [36] great city [37] Babylon, that [36] mighty city! for in [n] one hour is
11 thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall [34] weep and mourn over her; for no man [o] buyeth their mer-
12 chandise any more: the [38] merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones,[39] and of [40] pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood and all manner vessels [41] of ivory, and all manner vessels [41] of most precious
13 wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon,[42] and odours,[43] and ointments,[44] and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts,[45] and sheep, and horses,
14 and chariots, and slaves,[46] and [p] souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly [47] are departed [48] from
15 thee, and thou shalt [49] find them no more at all. The mer-

[e] Ch. xiv. 8, xvii. 2.
[f] Gen. xix. 15; Mat. xxiv. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 17.
[g] Jer. li. 9.
[h] Jer. l. 29.
[i] Ch. xiv. 8; xvii. 2.
[k] Ezek. xxviii. 2.
[l] Isa. xlvii. 8; Lam. i. 1.
[m] Ch. xvii. 16.
[n] Ver. 8; ch. xvii. 12.
[o] Ch. xiii. 17.
[p] Ezek. xxvii. 13.

[6] a [7] demons [8] unclean [9] hold
[10] *omit* all nations have drunk [11] by [12] *add* all the nations are fallen
[13] *omit* have [14] *omit* are [15] out of [16] the power of her luxury
[17] *add* forth [18] that ye may have no communion with [19] *add* even
[20] Render unto her [21] rendered [22] *omit* you
[23] *omit* hath [24] luxuriously [25] mourning [26] *add* unto [27] not a
[28] and shall in no wise see mourning [29] mighty [30] judged
[31] *omit* have [32] weep and wail over her [33] *omit* and lament for her
[34] *omit* shall [35] Woe, woe [36] the [37] city, [38] *omit* the
[39] stone [40] *omit* of [41] and every vessel
[42] *add* and spice, [43] incense [44] ointment [45] cattle
[46] bodies [47] sumptuous [48] perished [49] men shall

chants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand
afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,[50]
16 and[51] saying, Alas, alas[52] that[53] great city, that[54] was clothed[55]
in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked[56] with gold,
17 and precious stones, and pearls![57] For in one hour so great
riches is come to nought.[58] And every shipmaster,[59] and all the
company in ships,[60] and sailors, and as many as trade[61] by sea,
18 stood afar off, and cried when they saw[62] the smoke of her
burning, saying, What *city is* like unto[63] this[64] great city!
19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and
wailing,[65] saying, Alas, alas[52] that[53] great city, wherein were
made rich all that had[66] ships in the sea by reason of her
20 costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over
her, *thou* heaven, and *ye* holy[67] apostles and[68] prophets; for
21 God hath avenged you on her.[69] And a mighty angel took up
a stone like a great millstone, and [f] cast *it* into the sea, saying, [f] Jer. li. 63, 64.
Thus with violence[70] shall that great city Babylon be thrown
22 down,[71] and shall be found no more at all. And the [r] voice of [r] Isa. xxiv. 8.
harpers, and musicians,[72] and of[73] pipers, and trumpeters, shall
be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatso-
ever craft *he be*,[74] shall be found any more[75] in thee; and the
sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;
23 and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee;
and the voice of the [s] bridegroom and of the bride shall be [s] Jer. vii. 34.
heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great
men of the earth; for by thy sorceries[76] were all nations
24 deceived. And in her was found the [t] blood of prophets, and [t] Mat. xxiii.
of saints, and of all that were slain[77] upon the earth. 35.

[50] mourning [51] *omit* and [52] Woe, woe [53] the [54] she that
[55] arrayed [56] gilded [57] stone, and pearl [58] is made desolate
[59] pilot [60] and every one that saileth any whither
[61] gain their living [62] as they looked upon [63] *omit* unto
[64] the [65] *add* their [66] and ye saints, and ye [67] *add* ye
[68] hath judged your judgment upon her [69] a bound
[70] shall Babylon the great city be cast down [71] minstrels [72] *omit* of
[73] omit *he be* [74] *add* at all [75] sorcery [76] slaughtered

CONTENTS. The chapter before us is occupied with the fall of Babylon, and it naturally divides itself into three parts. The first contains the announcement of the city's fall (vers. 1–3); the second is a powerful description of amazement and lamentation over her fate, proceeding from all who had been dependent upon her (vers. 4–20); the third points out the completeness and irremediableness of her ruin (vers. 21–24).

Ver. 1. **Another angel** appears **having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory.** These last words are in all probability taken from Ezek. xliii. 2, 'and the earth shined with his glory.' They illustrate the greatness of his mission, and the manner in which the whole 'earth' shall be struck with its glorious accomplishment. As in chap. vii. 2 this angel has a closer than ordinary connection with the Lord Himself.

Ver. 2. He cried **with a mighty voice.** This is the only passage in the book in which a voice is spoken of as 'mighty,' the usual appellation being 'great.' In chap. xix. 6 we read of 'mighty thunders,' and it is impossible to doubt, therefore, that this voice is described in a similar way, not because all men are to hear it, but because it is to strike all with awe and terror (comp. ver. 8).—**Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.** These words have already met us at chap. xiv. 8 (comp. Isa. xxi. 9), but the description is now enlarged, Old Testament passages such as Isa. xiii. 21, Jer. li. 37, supplying the particulars.

Everything about the city is changed into a wild and hateful desert. The unclean beasts and birds themselves that are driven into her ruins regard them as a prison.

Ver. 3. The cause of the city's fall is again stated in the words of this verse.

Ver. 4. A new stage in the drama opens. **Another voice out of heaven** is heard, **saying, Come forth out of her, my people, that ye may have no communion with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.** The voice is that of an angel although, as coming out of heaven, we are to hear in it the voice of God or of Christ; and hence the use of the word 'My' before 'people.' It is a summons to God's people to depart out of Babylon, and there are many parallels both in the Old and in the New Testament, Gen. xix. 15–22; Num. xvi. 23-26; Isa. xlviii. 20, lii. 11; Jer. li. 6, 45; Matt. xxiv. 16. Two reasons are assigned for this departure; first, that God's people may have no communion with the sins of Babylon, and secondly, that they may escape participation in her punishment. As to the former, it does not seem necessary to think that they were in danger of being betrayed into sin; were they not all sealed ones? But it was well for them to be delivered even from the very presence of sin, and from the judgments that follow it (comp. 2 Pet. ii. 7-9).

Ver. 5. So multiplied were her sins that they were heaped together as a mass reaching **even unto heaven.** The figure is taken from Jer. li. 9 (comp. Gen. xviii. 20).

Ver. 6. **Render unto her even as she rendered, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she filled fill to her double.** The same voice is continued, but is now addressed to the ministers of judgment, the kings and the beast, who have turned round upon the harlot (chap. xvii. 16). Judgment is administered according to the *lex talionis;* and the doubling seems to be founded on the law of Ex. xxii. 4, 7, 9, and on the threatening of Jer. xvi. 18. Her sins have been so great that there has been a double mention of them (ver. 5), and the punishment shall be proportioned to the sin (comp. also Isa. xl. 2; Jer. xvii. 18).

Ver. 7. In this verse the *lex talionis* is still administered both in extent and in severity. The humiliation of Babylon shall be the counterpart of her glorying. **For she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am not a widow, and shall in no wise see mourning.** The spirit of her glorying is expressed in three clauses, of which the second is peculiarly worthy of our notice. Commentators who see in Babylon the world-city are compelled to think of the beast and of the kings associated with it as the husband by the loss of whom Babylon had been reduced to widowhood. Such an interpretation is impossible. That husband had not been lost; the kings were not dead, they had only turned against her; while the words imply that she really is a widow although she does not feel it. If so, her boast can only be that she does not need the Lord for her husband. She has found another husband and many lovers. That she says these things 'in her heart' can hardly be intended to exclude the idea of loud boastings. The words rather lead us to think of the deep-seated nature of that spirit of glorying by which she is possessed (comp. Isa. xlvii. 7, 8).

Ver. 8. With suddenness and fearfulness her plagues shall come upon her. In **one day** her glory shall be turned to shame. In the midst of her feasting an unseen hand shall write upon the wall of her banqueting-room that she is weighed in the balances and is found wanting, and 'that night' she shall perish (comp. Isa. xlvii. 9), **for mighty is the Lord God who judged her.**

At this point three classes of persons are introduced to us, uttering their lamentations over the fall of Babylon—kings (vers. 9, 10), merchants (vers. 11–16), sailors (vers. 17–19). At ver. 20 there follows a general call to rejoice over what has happened to her. The whole is moulded upon the lamentation over Tyre in Ezek. xxvi., xxvii., and is of unequalled pathos.

Vers. 9, 10. In these verses we have the lamentation of the **kings of the earth** over the disaster which they have been instrumental in accomplishing. The deeds of the wicked, even when effecting the purposes of God, bring no joy to themselves. It is the righteous only who rejoice (ver. 20). Notice the threefold naming of the city, 'the great city,' 'Babylon,' 'the mighty city.'

Vers. 11–17A. These verses contain the lamentation of the **merchants of the earth,** as they mourn over the fate of a city which presented such a gorgeous picture of worldly riches and extravagance. The expression at the close of ver. 13, **souls of men,** is difficult to understand. A glance at the original is sufficient to show that it cannot be construed with that immediately preceding it, 'slaves,' or, as in the margin of the Revised Version, 'bodies.' The contrast is not, therefore, between the body and the soul, so as to allow us to interpret the clause before us as if it meant a spiritual traffic,—some means by which Babylon so ruined the higher nature of men that she might be said to traffic in their souls. The word translated 'souls' takes us rather to the thought of persons, as in Ezek. xxvii. 13; and the probabilities are then in favour of the idea that they are slaves. If this be correct we shall be obliged to reject the rendering given both by the Authorised and Revised Versions to the preceding substantive 'slaves,' and to translate it literally 'bodies.' Associated with **horses and chariots** it will then represent some other means by which burdens were conveyed, and will lead us to the thought of hired persons.

Vers. 17B–19. These verses contain the lamentation of the third group that bewails the fall of Babylon, consisting of sailors and of all who trade by sea.

Attention has been already called to the fact that the imagery of this chapter is largely drawn from Ezek. xxvi. and xxvii., *i.e.* from chapters describing the fall of Tyre. This, however, need occasion us no surprise, for in the Old Testament Tyre is viewed as if she were another Babylon (comp. Isa. xxiv. 10, 'The city of confusion,' *i.e.* Babylon, 'is broken down'). Again, it may seem at first sight as if the varied riches of this city can belong to nothing but a city in the ordinary sense of the word, and that they cannot be associated with any spiritual power. Yet it may be for these very riches that the disciples of Christ sacrifice their Lord, and they may obtain them as the reward of their faithlessness. They may act a part the reverse of that for which Moses is commended in Heb. xi., and may prefer the treasures of Egypt to the reproach of Christ. They may

yield to the temptation which Christ resisted, when, as He was offered the kingdoms of the world and all their glory, He replied, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' He withstood, suffered, and died. His degenerate followers may yield, accept, and live. But the price!—is worth considering.

Before passing from the lamentations before us, one interesting trait of the structural principles of the Apocalypse may be noticed. In ver. 9 'the kings of the earth *shall weep*;' in ver. 11 'the merchants of the earth *weep*;' in ver. 17 'the pilots, etc., *stood* afar off and *cried*.' From the future we pass to the present, from the present to the tense which expresses the taking up of their position in the most positive and determined manner. The sequence is probably to be explained by the circumstance that the destruction of the city is beheld as constantly drawing nearer. But its main interest consists in the illustration which it affords of the careful minuteness with which in the Apocalypse words, phrases, and constructions are selected, and of the depth of meaning which the writer, by each change of expression, intends to convey.

Ver. 20. The judgment of God upon the guilty city is supposed to have taken place. While it is a source of lamentation to the wicked, it is a joy to the righteous, and they are now summoned to experience that joy.—**For God hath judged your judgment upon her.** The meaning is that that judgment on the wicked which the righteous have passed is regarded as executed for them by God Himself.

Ver. 21. **And a mighty angel took up a stone as a great millstone and cast it into the sea.** A symbolic representation of the destruction of Babylon is to be given; and for this new vision a third angel appears, the first having appeared at chap. xvii. 1, the second at chap. xviii. 1. He is a 'mighty' angel, the third of this kind in the Apocalypse, the other two meeting us at chaps. v. 2 and x. 1. This angel acts after the manner described in Jer. li. 63, 64, only that here, in order to bring out more impressively the nature of the judgment, the stone is heavy as 'a great millstone.' The destruction is sudden and complete. The city disappears like a stone cast into the sea (comp. Jer. li. 63, 64).

Vers. 22–24. The destruction spoken of is enlarged on in strains of touching eloquence, but it is unnecessary to dwell on the particulars. They include everything belonging either to the business or to the joy of life. It may only be observed that following the word **for** in ver. 23 we have a threefold description of the sins by which judgment had been brought upon the city.—The words of ver. 24, **And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slaughtered upon the earth,** are important as confirming the interpretation that we have been dealing all along, not with a single city, but with the representation of some universal ungodliness and opposition to Christ. Nor does any parallel lie so near as that contained in the words of our Lord addressed to the degenerate Jews, 'that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah the son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation' (Matt. xxiii. 35). The 'slaughtering' spoken of suggests the idea that like the slaughtered Lamb the children of God had been slain in sacrifice.

Before passing from this chapter we have to turn to the important inquiry, What does this woman, this Babylon, represent? Different answers have been given to the question, the most widely accepted of which are, that she is either pagan Rome, or a great world-city of the last days (the metropolis of the world-power symbolized by the beast upon which she rides), or the Romish Church. That there is not a little in the description (more especially in chap. xvii. 9, 15, 18) to favour the idea of pagan Rome may be at once admitted. But the arguments against such an interpretation are decidedly preponderant. It supposes that the beast in its final form is controlled by the metropolis of the Roman Empire (chap. xvii. 3). This is so far from being the case that the Roman Empire is 'fallen' before the woman comes upon the stage. It has disappeared as completely as the other world-powers which had ruled before it. No doubt, the woman is mentioned at chap. xvii. 1, while it is only at ver. 10 that we read of the fall of the Roman power. But the beast upon which the woman sits at ver. 3 is the world-power in its last and highest manifestation, and is therefore subsequent to any of its earlier forms afterwards alluded to when the Seer carries his thoughts backward in order to trace its history. Again, pagan Rome was never turned round upon (in the manner rendered necessary by chap. xvii. 16), and hated, and made desolate, and burned by any world-powers that preceded her Christian condition. Once more, various individual expressions employed in these chapters are unsuitable to pagan Rome—chap. xvi. 19, because Babylon is to be in existence at the time when the last plagues are poured out; chap. xvii. 2, because no relations of the kind here spoken of existed between pagan Rome and those kings of the earth over whom, in the language of Alford, she rather 'reigned with undisputed and crushing sway;' chap. xviii. 2, because pagan Rome fell without having been reduced to the condition there described; chap. xviii. 11, 19, because pagan Rome never was a great commercial city, or, (if it be said that only her purchasing is referred to), because she did not cease to purchase even after her pagan condition came to an end. On the other hand, the words of chap. xviii. 24, obviously founded on Matt. xxiii. 35, cannot be applied to pagan Rome.

Alive to the force of such considerations, or others of a similar kind, the tendency of later expositors has been to abandon the idea of pagan Rome, and to resort to that of another city which they term the world-city of the last days;—some indeed seeing such a city in all the great cities that have at any time directed persecution against the people of God, others confining it more strictly to a city yet to arise. The difficulties attending this interpretation are even greater than in the case of the former. The tone of the passage as a whole is unfavourable to the thought of any metropolis whether of the past, the present, or the future. It is not the manner of the Apocalypse to symbolize by its emblems such material objects as a city, however huge its site, splendid its palaces, or wide its rule. The writer deals with spiritual truths; and to think that he would introduce this woman as the symbol of a city even far vaster than London or Paris or New York is

to lose sight of the spirit in which he writes. If it be urged that it is the dominion, not the stone and lime, of the city that he has in view, the extent of this dominion is fatal to the explanation. No such rule has belonged to any city either of ancient or modern times. Or, if the reply again be that the city is not yet come, it is unnecessary to say more than that the existence of so great a city is as yet at least inconceivable, and that thus one of the most solemn and weighty parts of the Apocalypse has been for eighteen centuries without a meaning. In addition, the use of the word 'mystery' in chap. xvii. 5 is at variance with the supposition. That word points at once to something spiritual (comp. on chap. xvii. 5), and cannot be applied to what is merely of the earth earthly. This interpretation, like the former, must be set aside.

The idea that we have before us in the woman papal Rome, either the Romish Church, or the papal spirit within that church, is of a different kind, and its fundamental principle may be accepted with little hesitation. The emblem employed leads directly to the idea of something connected with the Church. The woman is a 'harlot;' and, with almost unvarying uniformity, that appellation and the sin of whoredom are ascribed in the Old Testament not to heathen nations which had never enjoyed a special revelation of the Almighty's will, but only to those whom He had espoused to Himself, and who had proved faithless to their covenant relation to Him (Isa. i. 21; Jer. ii. 20, iii. 1, etc.). No more than two passages can be adduced to which this observation seems at first sight inapplicable (Isa. xxiii. 15–17; Nah. iii. 4), and these exceptions may be more apparent than real. The mention of whoredom in what was obviously a symbolical sense immediately suggested to Jewish ears the sin of defection from a state of former privilege in God.

Again, the harlot here is so distinctly contrasted with the 'woman' of chap. xii. and with the 'bride the Lamb's wife' of chap. xxi., that it is difficult, if not impossible, to resist the conviction that there must be a much closer resemblance between them than exists between a woman and a city. Compared with the former she is a woman; she is in a wilderness (chaps. xii. 14, xvii. 3); she is a mother (chaps. xii. 5, xvii. 5). Compared with the latter she is introduced to us in almost precisely the same language (chaps. xvii. 1, xxi. 9); her garments suggest ideas which, however specifically different, belong to the same region of thought (chaps. xvii. 4, xix. 8); she has the name of a city, 'Babylon,' while the bride is named 'New Jerusalem' (chaps. xvii. 5, xxi. 2): she persecutes, while the saints are persecuted (chaps. xii. 13, xvii. 6); she makes all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, while the faithful are nourished by their Lord (chaps. xiv. 8, xii. 14); she has a name of guilt upon her forehead, while the 144,000 have their Father's name written there (chaps. xvii. 5, xiv. 1). When we call to mind the large part played in the Apocalypse by the principle of contrasts, it is hardly possible to resist the conviction that the conditions associated with 'Babylon' are best fulfilled if we behold in her a spiritual system opposed to and contrasted with the true Church of God.

We are led to this conclusion also by the fact that both Jerusalem and Babylon have the same designation, that of 'the great city,' given them. This epithet is applied in chap. xi. 8 to a city, which can be no other than Jerusalem (see note), and the same remark may be made of chap. xvi. 19 (see note). In six other passages the epithet is applied to Babylon (chaps. xiv. 8, xviii. 10, 16, 18, 19, 21). The necessary inference is that there must be a sense in which Jerusalem is Babylon and Babylon Jerusalem. If it be not so we shall have to contend, in the interpretation of the Apocalypse, with difficulties of a kind altogether different from those that generally meet us. Interpretation indeed will become impossible, because the same word, occurring in different places of the book, will have to be applied to totally different objects. No doubt it may be urged that the two cities Jerusalem and Babylon have so little in common that it is unnatural to find in the latter a figure for the former. The objection is of little weight. In the first place, it may be observed that the description of the fall of Babylon in this chapter is in all probability taken as much from the prophecy of Hosea (chap. ii. 1–12) as from anything said expressly of that city in the Old Testament; and, as that prophecy applies to 'the house of Israel,' we have a proof that in the mind of the Apocalyptic Seer there was a sense in which the Babylon of this chapter and a particular aspect of Israel (and therefore also Babylon and Jerusalem) were closely associated with each other. Nor does it seem unworthy of notice that, at the moment when Hosea utters his warnings, he has before him the thought of a *change of name*, 'Then said God, Call his name Loammi; for ye are not My people, and I will not be your God' (chap. i. 9). The change of name might easily be transferred from the people to the city representing them; and if so, no name would more naturally connect itself in the mind of St. John with the things spoken of in chap. ii. of Hosea than that of Babylon. In the second place, there is an aspect of Jerusalem which most closely resembles that aspect of Babylon for the sake of which the latter city is here peculiarly referred to. We cannot read the Fourth Gospel without seeing that in the view of the Evangelist there was a second Jerusalem to be added to the Jerusalem of old, that there was not only a Jerusalem 'the city of God,' the centre of a Divine Theocracy, but a Jerusalem representing a degenerate Theocracy, *out of which Christ's people must be called* in order that they may form His faithful Israel, a part of His 'one flock' (see on John x. 1–10). At this point, then, it would seem that we are mainly to seek the ground of the comparison between Jerusalem and Babylon. In the latter city God's people spent seventy years of captivity; and, at the end of that time, they were summoned out of it. Many of them obeyed the summons. They returned to their own land to settle under their vines and fig-trees, to rebuild their city and temple, and to enjoy the fulfilment of God's covenant promises. All this was repeated in the days of Christ. The leaders of the old Theocracy had become 'thieves and robbers;' they had taken possession of the fold that they might 'steal and kill and destroy;' it was necessary that Christ's sheep should listen to the Good Shepherd, and should leave the fold that they might find open pastures. Not only so. Repeated then, the same course of history shall be

once more repeated. There shall again be a coming out of Christ's sheep from the fold which has for a time preserved them; and that fold shall be handed over to destruction. The probability is that this thought is to be traced even at chap. xi. 8, where Jerusalem is 'spiritually' called Sodom and Egypt. Not simply because of its sins did it receive these names, but because Sodom and Egypt afforded striking illustrations of the manner in which God summons His people out from among the wicked, Lot out of Sodom (Gen. xix. 12, 16, 17; Luke xvii. 28-32), Israel out of Egypt (Hos. xi. 1; Matt. ii. 15). Babylon, however, afforded the most striking illustration of such thoughts, and it thus became identified with the Jerusalem which we learn to know in the Fourth Gospel as the city of 'the Jews.' Out of that Jerusalem Christ's disciples are by His own lips exhorted to flee (Matt. xxiv. 15-20). The same command is given in the passage before us (chap. xviii. 4).

On these grounds it appears to us that there need be no hesitation in so far adopting the interpretation of those who understand by Babylon the Romish Church as to see in it what is fundamentally and essentially correct. The 'great city' is the emblem of a degenerate church. As in chap. xii. we have, under the guise of a woman, that true Church of Christ which is the embodiment of all good, so here, under the guise of a harlot, we have that false Church which has sacrificed its Lord for the sake of the honours, the riches, and the pleasures of the world. It is not necessary to think, with Auberlen, that the woman *is changed* into the harlot. Such an idea is opposed to the general teaching of the Apocalypse with regard to the Church of Christ; and the feeling that it is inconsistent with the promise of our Lord in Matt. xvi. 18 has led many to reject who would otherwise have welcomed the view we have defended. But no such idea of *change* is necessary. Babylon is simply a second aspect of the Church. Just as there were two aspects of Jerusalem in the days of Christ, under the one of which that city was the centre of attraction both to God and Israel, under the other the metropolis of a degenerate Judaism, so there are two aspects of the Church of Christ, under the one of which we think of those who within her are faithful to their Lord, under the other of the great body of merely nominal Christians who in words confess but in deeds deny Him. The Church in this latter aspect is before us under the term 'Babylon;' and it would appear to be the teaching of Scripture, as it is certainly that alike of Jewish and Christian history, that the longer the Church lasts as a great outward institution in the world the more does she tend to realize this picture. As her first love fails, she abandons the spirit for the letter, makes forms of one kind or another a substitute for love, allies herself with the world, and by adapting herself to it secures the ease and the wealth which the world will never bestow so heartily upon anything as upon a Church in which the Divine oracles are dumb.

Beyond this point it is not possible to accompany those who understand by Babylon the Romish Church. Deeply that Church has sinned. Not a few of the darkest traits of 'Babylon' apply to her with a closeness of application which may not unnaturally lead us to think that the picture of these chapters has been drawn from nothing so much as her. Her idolatries, her outward carnal splendour, her oppression of God's saints, her merciless cruelties with torture the dungeon and the stake, the tears and agonies and blood with which she has filled so many centuries —these and a thousand circumstances of a similar kind may well be our excuse if in 'Babylon' we read Christian Rome. Yet the interpretation is false. The harlot is *wholly* what she seems. Christian Rome has never been wholly what on one side of her character she was so largely. She has maintained the truth of Christ against idolatry and unchristian error, she has preferred poverty to splendour in a way that Protestantism has never done, she has nurtured the noblest types of devotion that the world has seen, and she has thrilled the waves of time as they passed over her with one constant litany of supplication and chant of praise. Above all, it has not been the chief characteristic of Rome to ally herself with kings. She has rather trampled kings beneath her feet; and, in the interests of the poor and the oppressed, has taught both proud barons and imperial tyrants to quail before her. For deeds like these her record is not with the beast but with the Lamb. Babylon cannot be Christian Rome; and nothing has been more injurious to the Protestant churches than the impression that she was so, and that they were free from participation in her guilt. Babylon embraces much more than Rome, and illustrations of what she is lie nearer our own door. Wherever professedly Christian men have thought the world's favour better than its reproach; wherever they have esteemed its honours a more desirable possession than its shame; wherever they have courted ease rather than welcomed suffering, have loved self-indulgence rather than self-sacrifice, and have substituted covetousness in grasping for generosity in distributing what they had,—there has been a part of the spirit of Babylon. In short, we have in the great harlot-city neither the Christian Church as a whole nor the Romish Church in particular, but all who anywhere within the Church profess to be Christ's 'little flock' and are not,—denying in their lives the main characteristic by which they ought to be distinguished,—that they 'follow' Christ.

It may be well to remark, in conclusion, that the view now taken relieves us of any difficulty in accounting for the lamentation in chap. xviii. of kings and merchants and shipmasters over the fall of Babylon, as if these persons had no interest in her fate. So far is this from being the case, that nothing has contributed more to deepen and strengthen the worldliness of the world than the faithlessness of those who ought to testify that the true inheritance of man is beyond the grave, and that the duty of all is to seek 'a better country, even an heavenly.' A mere worldly and utilitarian system of Ethics may be better trusted to correct the evils of a growing luxuriousness, than a system which teaches that we may serve both God and Mammon, and that it is possible to make the best of both worlds.

CHAPTER XIX. 1–10.

VICTORY AND REST.

1. *Song of Triumph over the Fall of Babylon.*

1 AND[1] after these things I heard[2] a great voice of much
people[3] in [a]heaven, saying, [b]Alleluia; [c]Salvation,[4] and[5]
2 glory, and honour,[6] and[5] power, unto the Lord our God:[7] for
true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath [d]judged
the great whore,[8] which did corrupt the earth with her fornica-
tion, and[9] hath avenged the [e]blood of his servants at her hand.
3 And again[10] they said, Alleluia. And her smoke [f]rose[11] up
4 for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the
four beasts[12] fell down and worshipped God that sat[13] on the
5 throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of[14]
the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and[15] ye
6 that fear him, both[16] [g]small and[17] great. And I heard as it
were the[18] voice of a great multitude, and as the[18] voice of
many [h]waters, and as the[18] voice of mighty thunderings,[19]
saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent [i]reigneth.[20]
7 Let us be glad[21] and rejoice,[22] and give honour[23] to him: for
the [k]marriage of the Lamb is come, and his [l]wife hath made
8 herself[m] ready. And to her was [n]granted[24] that she should
be arrayed[25] in fine linen, clean and white:[26] for the fine linen
9 is the righteousness[27] of[28] saints. And he saith unto me,
[o]Write, Blessed *are* they which are called[29] unto the marriage
supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the
10 true sayings[30] of God. And I [p]fell at[31] his feet to worship
him. And he said[32] unto me, See *thou do it* not: I am thy
fellow-servant, and[33] of thy brethren that have the [q]testimony[34]
of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony[34] of Jesus is the
spirit of prophecy.

[a] Ch. xviii. 20. [b] Ps. civ. 35, cxlv. cl. [c] Ch. vii. 10, xii. 10. [d] Ch. vi. 10. [e] Ch. xviii. 24. [f] Gen. xix. 28. [g] Ch. xi. 18. [h] Ch. xiv. 2. [i] Ch. xi. 15. [k] Eph. v. 32. [l] Ps. xlv. 9, 10. [m] Mat. xxv. 10. [n] Ps. xlv. 14. [o] Ch. i. 11, xiv. 13. [p] Ch. xxii. 8. [q] Ch. i. 2, 9.

[1] *omit* And [2] *add* as it were [3] of a great multitude
[4] The salvation [5] *add* the [6] *omit* and honour [7] are our God's
[8] harlot [9] *add* he [10] a second time [11] goeth
[12] living creatures [13] sitteth [14] came forth from [15] *omit* and
[16] the [17] *add* the [18] a [19] thunders
[20] for the Lord hath taken to him his kingdom, even our God, the Almighty
[21] rejoice [22] be exceeding glad [23] and let us give the glory
[24] And it was given to her [25] array herself [26] bright and pure
[27] righteous acts [28] *add* the [29] bidden [30] words
[31] fell down before [32] saith [33] *add* the fellow-servant [34] witness

CONTENTS. With the beginning of this chapter we enter upon the fifth great section of the Apocalypse, which extends to chap. xx. 6. The object of the section is to bring before us the triumph and rest of the faithful disciples of Jesus after their conflict is over. They have had to contend alike with the world and with the degenerate Church. They have been separated from both; and both have fallen. There is no more struggle for them now, except the final one yet to be described in chap. xx. 7–15. So far as they are concerned, however, that, as we shall see

hereafter, can hardly be called a struggle, for their enemies shall no sooner be gathered together against them than they shall be completely and for ever overwhelmed. The first notice of this happy state is presented in the song of thanksgiving sung by the heavenly hosts and by the redeemed from among men over the destruction of Babylon.

Ver. 1. The heavenly hosts are the first to sing. Their keynote is **Hallelujah**, a word meaning 'Praise the Lord,' and found in the New Testament only here and in vers. 3, 4, 6 of this chapter. So in one song of heaven which has no termination closes the Book of Psalms, that 'great book of the wars of the Lord,' when the wars have ceased for ever (comp. Neale and Littledale on Psalm cl.).

Ver. 2. The word **true** of this verse again expresses what is real;—not merely that God has fulfilled His words, but that His judgments correspond to the reality and propriety of things.—**For he hath judged the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.** The judgment particularly in view is specified in these words. We may observe how strictly it corresponds to the prayer of chap. vi. 10,—'judge,' 'avenge.'

Ver. 3. **And a second time they said, Hallelujah.** The thought of a 'second' time has peculiar importance in the eyes of St. John (comp. John iv. 54). It confirms with a singular degree of emphasis the idea with which it is connected. —**And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever.** It went up as the smoke of Sodom (Gen. xix. 28). Before, in chap. xi. 8, 'the city' that was spiritually 'Sodom and Egypt' was that where our Lord was crucified—Jerusalem. Here it is Babylon. The fate of the first city out of which God's people were called turns out to have been a prophecy of the fate of the last. Thus does God fulfil His word, and 'bind and blend in one the morning and the evening of His creation' (Dr. Pusey). But it was more tolerable for Sodom than it will be for Babylon; for (though indeed St. Peter says Sodom 'suffereth the vengeance of eternal fire,' yet) its fires were quenched in the waters of the Dead Sea. This fire goes up 'for ever and ever' (comp. Isa. lxvi. 24).

Ver. 4. **The four and twenty elders and the four living creatures** respond to the song of the heavenly host. The Elders we heard last at chap. xi. 16, at the moment when the seventh trumpet had sounded, and the 'great voices in heaven' had declared, 'The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.' One of the four living creatures we saw last at chap. xv. 7, when it gave to the seven angels their 'seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God.' With peculiar propriety, therefore, these beings first answer the hosts of heaven with their loud **Amen**, and then take up their song **Hallelujah.**

Ver. 5. A voice is next heard from the throne calling upon all God's people to **give praise to** Him. The voice is immediately answered.

Ver. 6. **And I heard as it were a voice of a great multitude, and as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord hath taken to him his kingdom, even our God, the Almighty.** The song is new, celebrating something greater and higher than the last, not merely judgment on foes, but the full taking possession of His kingdom by the Lord.

Ver. 7. **Let us rejoice, and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.** Up to this time the actual marriage of the Redeemer to His people has not taken place. The two parties have only been betrothed to one another (comp. 2 Cor. xi. 2). At length the hour has come when the marriage shall be completed, the Lord Himself being manifested in glory and His bride along with Him.

Ver. 8. **And it was given to her that she should array herself in fine linen bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.** The bride arrays herself in her garments of beauty, that she may go forth to meet the Bridegroom, may enter in with Him to the marriage ceremony, and may be united to Him for ever in the marriage bond. Her robes are of dazzling whiteness, free from every stain; nor are they an outward show. Her righteousness is more than imputed, and her whole being is penetrated by it. She is in Christ; she is one with Him; His righteousness takes possession of her in such a manner that it becomes her own; it is a part of herself and of her life. St. John had no fear of saying that the redeemed shall be presented before God in 'righteous acts' of their own. He could not think of them except as at once justified and sanctified in Jesus.

Ver. 9. **And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.** We are not distinctly informed who the person here spoken of is; but, inasmuch as we seem to be still dealing with the 'strong angel' of chap. xviii. 21, we are probably to think of him. After the marriage comes the marriage supper, the fulness of blessing to be enjoyed by the redeemed. It may be a question whether we are to distinguish between the bride herself and those who appear rather to be spoken of as guests at the marriage supper. But the analogy of Scripture, and especially of such passages as Matt. xxii. 2, xxvi. 29, leads to the conclusion that no such distinction can be drawn. Those who are faithful in the Lord are at once the Lamb's bride, and the Lamb's guests. Any difficulty of interpretation arises simply from the difficulty, so often met with, of representing under one figure the varied relations between the Lord and His people. By the Lamb's wife, too, we must surely understand the whole believing Church, and not any separate section of it distinguished from, and more highly favoured than, the rest. As there is one Bridegroom so there is one bride. If, therefore, according to the opinion of many, we are dealing here with the 144,000 of chap. xiv., an additional proof will be afforded that in that mystical number the whole company of believers was included.—**And he said unto me, These are the true words of God.** The word 'These' refers, not to all that has been revealed since chap. xvii. 1, but to the last revelations made; and they are 'true,' expressive of the great realities now taking place.

Ver. 10. **And I fell down before his feet to worship him,** fell overwhelmed with astonishment and delight.—**And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant and the fellow-servant of thy brethren that have the**

witness of Jesus: worship God. The angel reminds the Apostle that worship is due to God alone; that he himself is only his fellow-servant and the fellow-servant of all who have the witness of Jesus,—whose personal possession the witness of Jesus is become.—**For the witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.** The words are spoken by the angel, and they contain the reason why, high as he may seem to be, he ought to be looked upon in no other light than as the *fellow-servant* of all who believe in Jesus. The argument is as follows:—'All believers are witnesses of Jesus (comp. chap. xii. 17); I, because I prophesy, and because the witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, am also a witness of Jesus; thou and I therefore occupy the same footing before God, and we must worship God alone (comp. chap. xxii. 9).'

CHAPTER XIX. 11–21.

VICTORY AND REST.

2. *The Victory of the Word and the Overthrow of His Enemies.*

11 AND I saw[1] heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and
he that sat upon him *was*[2] called [a]Faithful and True, [a] Ch. iii. 14.
12 and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His[3]
[b]eyes *were*[4] as a flame of fire, and on his head *were*[4] many [b] Ch. i. 14, ii. 18.
crowns;[5] and he had[6] a name written, that no man [c]knew,[7] [c] Judg. xiii. 18; Mat. xi. 27.
13 but he himself. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in[8]
14 blood: and his name is called The [d]Word of God. And the [d] Jo. i. 1, 14; 1 Jo. i. 2.
[e]armies *which were* in heaven [f]followed him upon white horses, [e] Ver. 19. [f] Ps. cx. 3.
15 clothed in fine linen, white and clean.[9] And out of his mouth
goeth a sharp [g]sword, that with it he[10] should smite the [g] Ch. i. 16, ii. 12, 16.
nations: and[11] he shall rule[12] them with a [h]rod[13] of iron: and [h] Ch. ii. 27, xii. 5.
he [i]treadeth the winepress[14] of the fierceness and[15] wrath of [i] Ch. xiv. 19, 20; Isa.
16 Almighty God. And he hath on *his* vesture[16] and on his lxiii. 3.
[k]thigh a [l]name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD [k] Ps. xlv. 3. [l] Cp ch. xvii. 14.
17 OF LORDS. And I saw an[17] angel standing [m]in the sun; [m] Ch. iv. 4.
and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls[18] that
fly in the [n]midst of heaven,[19] Come and gather yourselves [n] Ch. viii. 13, xiv. 6.
18 together[20] unto the supper of the great God;[21] that ye may
eat the [o]flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh [o] Isa. xcix. 6; Zeph. i. 7.
of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on
them, and the flesh of all *men, both* free and bond, both[22] small
19 and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth,
and their armies, gathered together to make [p]war against him [p] Ch. xvi. 14.
20 that sat on the horse, and against his [q]army. And the beast [q] Ch. xi. 8.
was taken, and with him the [r]false prophet[23] that wrought [r] Ch. xvi. 13, xx. 10.
miracles before him,[24] with which he deceived them that had
received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his

[1] *add* the [2] omit *was* [3] And his [4] are [5] diadems [6] hath
[7] no one knoweth [8] And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with
[9] pure [10] he himself [11] *add* as a shepherd [12] tend [13] sceptre
[14] *add* of the wine [15] of the [16] garment [17] one
[18] birds [19] fly in mid-heaven [20] Come, be gathered together
[21] the great supper of God [22] and [23] the false prophet with him
[24] wrought the signs in his sight

image. These both[25] were cast alive into a[26] [s]lake of fire
21 burning[27] with brimstone. And the [t]remnant[28] were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded[29] out of his mouth: and all the fowls[30] were filled with their flesh.

[s] Ch. xx. 10, xxi. 8.
[t] Ch. ii. 24, xii. 17.

[25] They twain [26] the [27] that burneth
[28] rest [29] even the sword that went [30] birds

CONTENTS. The Victory and Rest of God's people are further described. The Lord Himself comes forth to be married to His Church, and to lead her in to the marriage supper.

Ver. 11. **And I saw the heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him, called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.** It is the Lord Himself who comes to wind up the history of the world, to bring salvation to His own, and destruction to His enemies. The Heaven is opened, and a white horse appears, the same as that of chap. vi. 2. He who then went forth 'conquering and to conquer' returns in triumph. His victory is won. In His own being He has proved Himself to be 'faithful and true,'—'faithful' to all His promises, 'true' as the essence of all that is real and everlasting.

Ver. 12. The description of the Lord given in this verse sums up various characteristics of Him mentioned in earlier parts of the book; and the **many diadems** are in token of His rule over the many nations of the world. **And he hath a name written which no one knoweth, but he himself** (comp. chaps. ii. 17, iii. 12). This cannot be the name of either ver. 13 or ver. 16, for both these names are known. It must be some name which shall be fully understood only when the union between the Redeemer and His Church is perfected.

Ver. 13. **And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood, and his name is called The Word of God.** The idea is taken from Isa. lxiii. 2, 3, and is therefore that of a garment sprinkled not with the Warrior's own blood, but with the blood of His enemies. 'Is called,' *i.e.* is, and has been always, called.

The resemblance to John i. 1 and 1 John i. 1 need not be enlarged on.

Ver. 14. **And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure.** These armies comprise in all probability both the angels and the saints (comp. chap. xvii. 14). All triumph with their triumphant Head and King. But no blood is sprinkled upon *their* garments. So in Ps. cx. 3 the Psalmist does not speak of Messiah's people as fighting; they are 'willing in the day that He warreth' (Perowne).

Ver. 15. On the **sharp sword** mentioned in this verse comp. chaps. i. 16, ii. 12, 16. On the tending as a shepherd comp. ii. 27, xii. 5. The heaping up of words of judgment in the last clause is very striking, **the winepress of the wine of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.** For the 'winepress' comp. chap. xiv. 19, 20.

Ver. 16. **And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.** The name mentioned in ver. 12 was probably written on the forehead. The place of this name is different. It seems to have been written on the garment where it covers the thigh to which the sword is bound (Ps. xlv. 3). For the name itself comp. chap. xvii. 14. What was there indicated in prophecy is here realized. The warfare of the Lord is ended: 'All kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him' (Ps. lxxii. 11).

Ver. 17. **And I saw one angel standing in the sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come, be gathered together unto the great supper of God.** For the angel's standing 'in' the sun comp. what was said on the thrones of the twenty-four elders at chap. iv. 4. The Lamb is come. But another supper has to be eaten: it is ready, and the invitation to it is issued. All 'the birds that fly in mid-heaven' are invited; and it is apparently for this reason that the angel stands 'in the sun' (which is to be conceived of as in the zenith of its daily path), so that he can the more easily summon the birds that fly in the uppermost regions of the air. At the same time it seems not unlikely that the sun of chap. i. 16 is also in the writer's eye. The Son of man is come to judgment: the angel who summons to it is the expression of the sun as he 'shineth in his power.' Much difficulty has been felt in the effort to determine what is represented by these 'birds.' Yet attention to the natural strain of the passage as well as to ver. 21 ought to leave us in little doubt upon the point. They cannot possibly be the enemies of the Lord, the armies of antichrist, for ver. 18 shows us that these constitute the materials of the banquet, the food that is eaten. They must, therefore, be simply the birds of prey, the vultures, whose province it is to fly in the loftiest regions of the sky, and which are here introduced in order to convey to us a clear image of the destruction awaiting the ungodly. The picture is obviously taken from Ezek. xxxix. 17–22, and it forms a striking contrast to the supper of the Lamb spoken of in vers. 7–9. To this latter the people of the Lord come in peace and joy, and are feasted with the food which has been prepared for them by the Bridegroom of the Church. To the former the enemies of the Lord are summoned, not to feast but to afford a feast to all fierce and hateful birds.

Ver. 18. The idea of ver. 17 is expanded in this verse, the enemies of Christ being grouped under the various classes mentioned in it.

Ver. 19. **And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse and against his army.** No doubt the 'war' is that of chap. xvi. 14. It is the final war waged by the beast and his ten kings and their armies against Jesus and His army. The 'army' of the latter is in the singular; the 'armies' of the

former are in the plural. The thought of the unity of the one compared with the inner dissensions of the other lies at the bottom of the change (comp. chap. xi. 8).

Ver. 20. The description given in this verse can leave no doubt that we have here the two enemies of chap. xiii., the beast and the lamb-like beast with the two horns.—The 'lake of fire' is again mentioned in chaps. xx. 10, 14, and xxi. 8.

Ver. 21. **And the rest were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even the sword that went out of his mouth, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.** By 'the rest' here spoken of it seems probable that we are to understand all who have imbibed the principles of the beast and the false prophet, as distinguished from these two great enemies of Christ themselves. In like manner we read in chap. xii. 17 of 'the rest' of the woman's seed, as distinguished from the body of the professing Church. This 'rest' might have partaken of the supper of the Lamb, but they rejected the light because they loved the darkness; and the evil which they chose now brings with it swift and irresistible destruction.

CHAPTER XX. 1–6.

VICTORY AND REST.

3. *The Judgment of Satan and the completed Triumph of the Righteous.*

1 AND I saw an angel come[1] down from[2] heaven, having the
key of the [a]bottomless[3] pit[4] and a great [b]chain in[5] his
2 hand. And he laid hold on the [c]dragon, that[6] old [d]serpent,
which is the Devil, and Satan, and [e]bound him a thousand
3 years, and cast him into the bottomless[3] pit,[4] and shut him[7]
up,[8] and set a [f]seal upon[9] him, that he should deceive the
nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled:[10]
4 and[11] after that[12] he must be [g]loosed a little season.[13] And I
saw [h]thrones, and they sat upon them, and [i]judgment was
given unto them: and *I saw* the [k]souls of them that were[14]
beheaded for the [l]witness of Jesus, and for the word of God,
and which had not worshipped[15] the beast, neither his image,
neither had received[16] *his* mark upon their foreheads,[17] or in[18]
their hands;[19] and they lived[20] and reigned with Christ[21] a
5 thousand years. But[22] the [m]rest of the dead lived not again[23]
until the thousand years were[24] finished. This *is* the first
6 resurrection. Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first
resurrection: on such[25] the [n]second death hath no power, but
they shall be [o]priests of God and of Christ,[21] and shall reign
with him a thousand years.

[a] Ch. xi. 7, xvii. 8.
[b] Jude 6.
[c] Ch. xii. 3, xiii. 2, xvi. 13.
[d] Ch. xii. 9.
[e] Jo. xviii. 12.
[f] Mat. xxvii. 66.
[g] Ver. 7.
[h] Dan. vii. 22, ch. iii. 21.
[i] Ch. xviii. 20; 1 Cor. vi. 2.
[k] Ch. vi. 9.
[l] Ch. i. 9, xii. 17.
[m] Ch. ii. 24, xii. 17, xix. 21.
[n] Ver. 14; ch. ii. 11.
[o] Ch. i. 6.

[1] coming [2] out of [3] *omit* bottomless [4] abyss [5] upon
[6] the [7] it [8] *omit* up [9] and sealed it over
[10] finished [11] *omit* and [12] this [13] time [14] had been
[15] and such as worshipped not [16] and received not
[17] forehead [18] and upon [19] hand [20] lived, [21] the Christ
[22] *omit* But [23] *omit* again [24] should be [25] over these

CONTENTS. It is unnecessary to say anything of the difficulties attending the interpretation of the passage upon which we now enter, or to bespeak the indulgence of the reader. Let it be enough in the meantime to observe that the description of the Victory and Rest of the people of God is continued. The paragraph connects itself closely with chap. xix., and ought not to be separated from it.

Ver. 1. **And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain upon his hand.** We have here the second angel after the appearance of the Lord Himself at chap. xix. 11. This angel comes down

'out of heaven,' commissioned therefore by God, and clothed with His power. He has the key of the 'abyss,' which can be no other than that of chaps. ix. 1, 2, xi. 7, and xvii. 8. It is the abode of Satan, the home and source of all evil. It has a key, and this key is in the hands of Christ (comp. chap. i. 18). By Him it is entrusted to the angel for the execution of His purposes. At chap. ix. 2 the angel opened the abyss; here he locks it. In addition to the key the angel has a great chain upon his hand, *i.e.* hanging over his open hand and dropping down on either side. The chain is 'great' because of the end to which it is to be applied and its fitness to secure it.

Ver. 2. **And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan.** This dragon we have already met at chaps. xii. 3, 9, xiii. 2, 4, xvi. 13. He is the first of the three great enemies of the Church, who gives his authority to the beast, and is worshipped by the ungodly. The description corresponds to that at chap. xii. 9, the only difference being that now we read not that he 'is called' but that he 'is' the devil. Whether this change may be owing to the fact that by this time Satan has been made known in his actual working, whereas then he was only introduced to us, it may be difficult to say; it is of more importance to observe that the last mention of him identifies him with the first.—**And bound him a thousand years.** The 'binding' is more than a mere limitation of Satan's power. It puts a stop to that special evil working of his which is in the Seer's eye. The meaning of the thousand years we shall afterwards inquire into.

Ver. 3. **And cast him into the abyss,** *i.e.* into the place to which he naturally belongs.—**And shut it.** The angel closed the door of which he has the key, doubtless at the same time locking it, so that Satan should no longer continue the mischief he had done.—**And sealed it over him,** not only locking the door, but sealing it in order to make it doubly fast (Dan. vi. 17). In each of the acts thus described, the laying hold of Satan, the binding him, the putting him into the abyss, the closing and sealing the abyss, we have a mocking caricature of what was done to Jesus in the last days of His passion (John xviii. 12; Matt. xxvii. 60, 66).—**That he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be finished.** 'The' thousand years, as shown by the use of the article, are the same as in ver. 2, and nothing more therefore need be said of them at present. But who are 'the nations'? They are mentioned again in ver. 8, as being in the 'four corners of the earth,' as being 'Gog and Magog.' One distinguished commentator (*Bleek*) regards them as 'the heathen nations still remaining on the earth, which are also supposed to remain there during the thousand years' kingdom, but at its most extreme and minutest points, so that the citizens of the Messianic kingdom do not come in contact with them, nor is their power disturbed by them.' Another (*Alford*) has the same general idea, but with this difference, that he considers them to be, during the thousand years, 'quiet and willing subjects of the kingdom,' who are again seduced by Satan after he is let loose. A third (*Düsterdieck*) makes them simply the heathen. A fourth (*Kliefoth*) draws a distinction between them and those meant by the 'whole world' or the 'whole inhabited world' (chaps. iii. 10, xii. 9, xvi. 14). These latter expressions are referred to the civilized and cultured nations of antiquity, while the more distant and barbarous peoples, living as it were upon the confines of the globe, are comprehended under the former. Over the one 'the beast' had exercised his sway, and they alone were destroyed at chap. xix. 17–21. The other, 'the nations,' were not involved in that destruction, but were still left upon the earth. The distinction thus drawn between cultured and uncultured peoples seems, however, to be inconsistent with various direct statements of the Apocalypse. Thus at chap. iii. 10 not only is there nothing to suggest the thought of only cultured peoples, but the 'whole inhabited world' spoken of must be understood in a sense as wide as that belonging to the words 'them that dwell upon the earth' which immediately follow. At chap. xii. 9, where the rule of the dragon is described, it is impossible to limit the expression 'the whole inhabited world' in the manner proposed, for chap. xiii. 7 gives the beast, the vicegerent of Satan, universal power, and the influence of Babylon, with which that of the beast and therefore of Satan must be coextensive, extends to 'all the nations,' including the 'kings' and 'merchants' of the earth (chaps. xiv. 8, xviii. 3, 23). Again, the words 'the nations' are used in a much wider sense than that of barbarous tribes in chap. xi. 22, where they have their part in history; in chap. xi. 18, where they must refer to the wicked in general in contrast with the good; in chap. xvi. 19, where they have 'cities;' in chap. xix. 15, where they embrace all the enemies of Christ; and in chap. xxi. 24, where they cannot be limited to one section only of the heathen. In short, there does not appear to be a single passage of the Apocalypse in which 'the whole inhabited world' means the polished, or 'the nations' the unpolished, undeveloped, nations of the globe. The only admissible interpretation, therefore, of the phrase 'the nations' is that which understands by it the unchristian godless world.

These nations Satan is to 'deceive' no more until the thousand years are finished. The word 'deceive' is again used in ver. 8, where we have a further description of that in which the deception consists. In the meantime it is enough to say that the word 'till' employed by the Seer takes us forward to the deception practised at the end of the thousand years as that which he has in view. *What the dragon will then do he does not do till then.* It is thus not a general but a particular deception that is contemplated. We are not necessarily to think of a cessation of Satan's misleading of the world; but the 'deceiving' which he does not practise till the thousand years are finished is definite and special.—**After this he must be loosed a little time.** The word 'must' expresses, as usual, conformity to the purposes of God, who will certainly carry out His own plan.

Ver. 4. **And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.** A new vision, or rather a further unfolding of that with which we have been occupied, is presented to us. We have first to ask what the 'thrones' are. Are they simply places of exalted dignity, or are they seats for judgment? The two ideas might be combined were it not that reigning, not judging, is the prominent idea both of this passage and of Dan. vii. 22 upon which the representation in all probability rests. The thrones before us are thrones of kings (chap.

iii. 21). Those that 'sat upon them' are certainly neither angels nor God; nor are they the twenty-four Elders, for it is the invariable practice of the Seer to name the latter when he has them in view. They can be no other than all the faithful members of Christ's Church, or at least all of whom it is said in the last clause of the verse that they 'reigned' with Christ.—**And judgment was given unto them.** These words cannot mean that the righteous were beheld seated as assessors with the Christ in judgment, for the word of the original used for judgment denotes the result and not the act of judging; and, so far as appears, there were at this moment none before them to be judged. The use of the word 'given' leads to the thought of a judgment affecting themselves rather than others. If so, the most natural meaning will be that the result of judgment was in such a manner given them that they did not need to come into the judgment. As they had victory before they fought (1 John v. 4; see also on ver. 9), so they were acquitted before they were tried. —**And I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not his mark upon their forehead and upon their hand.** What the Seer beheld was 'souls,' and the analogy of chap. vi. 9, a passage in many respects closely parallel to this, makes it clear that they were no more than *souls*. They had not yet been clothed with their resurrection bodies. The word 'beheaded' is very remarkable; nor does it seem a sufficient explanation when it is said that beheading was a Roman punishment. It was certainly not in this way alone that the earliest witnesses of Jesus met at the hands of the Roman power their martyr fate. There must be some other reason for the use of so singular a term. It would seem that the bodies of Jewish criminals were usually cast out into the valley of Hinnom, 'the beheaded or hanged in one spot, the stoned or burnt in another' (Geikie's *Life of Christ*, ii. 575). May the Seer have in his mind the thought present to him in chap. xi. 8, 9, when he spoke of the dead bodies of the two witnesses as lying in the street of the great city and not suffered to be laid in a tomb? These were the 'beheaded.' The exposure to which they had been subjected, and the contumely with which they had been treated, are thought of more than the manner of their death. And who were they? Are they no others than those described in the next clause as 'not worshipping the beast,' etc., or are they martyrs in the more special sense of the term? The particular relative employed in the original for 'such as,' together with the grammatical construction, favours the former idea. In all the clauses of the verse only a single class is spoken of, that of Christ's faithful ones, and they are described first by their fate and next by their character (comp. chap. i. 7, and see on chap. xiv. 12). If we suppose them to be martyrs in the literal sense we must think of that very small class which suffered by decapitation, excluding the much larger 'army of martyrs' who had fallen by other means. Besides which, we introduce a distinction between two classes of Christians that is foreign to the teaching of Christ both in the Apocalypse and elsewhere. God's people without exception are always with their Lord; the promise that they shall sit upon His throne is to *every one* that overcometh (chap. iii. 21); and in ver. 6 nothing more is said of these beheaded sufferers than may be said of all believers. We have already seen that St. John recognises no Christianity that is not attended by suffering and the cross. Every attempt to distinguish between actual martyrs and other true followers of Jesus must in the very nature of the case be vain. How often has there been more true martyrdom in bearing years of pining sickness or meeting wave after wave of sorrow than in encountering sword or axe or fire! —**And they lived, and reigned with the Christ a thousand years.** The word 'lived' must, by every rule of interpretation, be understood in the same sense here as in the following clause, where it is applied to 'the rest of the dead.' In the latter connection, however, it cannot express life spiritual and eternal, or be referred to anything else than mere awaking to life after the sleep of death in the grave is over. In this sense we must understand it now. The word might have been translated 'rose to life' as in chaps. ii. 8, xiii. 14. At this point, therefore, the resurrection of the righteous comes in—they 'lived.' But they not only lived, they 'reigned.' The word denotes only that condition of majesty, honour, and blessedness to which the righteous are exalted. There is no need to think of persons over whom they rule.

Ver. 5. **The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished.** If the view taken of ver. 4 be correct, the 'rest of the dead' spoken of in ver. 5 can signify none but the ungodly. Believers without exception have been included among those enumerated in the previous verse. There remain only those who have rejected the Lamb, and have given themselves to the service of the beast. Apart from this consideration, we are led by the Apocalypse itself to interpret the word 'dead' of the ungodly (comp. on chap. xi. 18). No doubt it is difficult to say why in this case we should read of 'the rest of the dead' rather than of 'the dead.' May it be that they are viewed as the counterpart of the faithful remnant which we have met in chaps. ii. 24 and xii. 17? At the point now reached by us the resurrection of all men, both good and bad, has taken place.—**This is the first resurrection.** The word 'this' with which the last clause of the verse begins is to be understood as bearing its common acceptation 'of this nature.' The writer refers not to the word 'lived' alone, where it first occurs in his previous description, but even more particularly to the word 'reigned;' or, rather, he refers to the whole account which he has given of the blessedness of the righteous. He is thus, it will be observed, speaking not of an *act*, but of a *state*. He is not thinking of any first act of rising in contrast with a second act of the same kind. He is describing the condition of certain persons in comparison with others *after an act of rising, predicable of them both, has taken place*. Hence the fact, so different from what we should naturally, on first reading the words, expect,—that there is no mention of a second resurrection. Nor can it be for a moment pled that the first resurrection implies a second. The Seer chooses his words too carefully to leave room for such an inference. The contrast that he has in view is not between a first and a second resurrection, but between a 'first resurrection' and a 'second death.' In the first of these two the rising from the dead may be included, but the

thought of the *condition* to which that rising leads is more prominent than the act.

Ver. 6. **Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.** In chap. xix. 9 *all* believers were pronounced 'blessed,' and the word 'holy' denotes the consecration that is given not to a few only but to *all* the saints of God (chaps. xviii. 20, xix. 8): besides which, we are immediately told, they 'shall be priests of God and of the Christ.' The whole description leads directly to the view that all Christians have part in the reign of the thousand years, whatever it may mean.—**Over these the second death hath no power.** We have spoken of the 'first resurrection' as a state, not an act. It is even more clear that the same thing must be said of the 'second death.' The Seer has indeed himself distinctly explained it when he says, in ver. 14, 'This is the second death, *even* the lake of fire' (comp. also chap. ii. 11). It is more than the death of the body, more even than the death of the body (could we suppose such a thing) twice repeated. It is the death of the whole man, body and soul together, the 'eternal punishment' denounced by our Lord against those who refuse to imitate His example, and to imbibe His spirit (Matt. xxv. 46). As again bearing on our exposition of ver. 4, it may be well to notice that escaping the 'second death' is spoken of in chap. ii. 11 as the privilege not of those alone who are in a special sense martyrs, but of all believers.—**But they shall be priests of God and of the Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.** These words again mention privileges (1) that are common to all believers, and (2) that continue not for a thousand years merely, but for ever. All believers are 'priests' (chap. i. 6); all sit upon Christ's 'throne' (chap. iii. 21).

CHAPTER XX. 7–10.

The last Outbreak and Overthrow of Satan.

7 AND when the thousand years are [a] expired,[1] Satan shall be
8 loosed out of his prison, and shall go out[2] to deceive the nations which are in the [b] four quarters[3] of the earth, [c] Gog and Magog, to gather them together to [d] battle:[4] the number
9 of whom *is* as the sand of the sea. And they went up on[5] the [e] breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the [f] beloved city: and [g] fire came down from God[6]
10 out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived[7] them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where[8] the [h] beast and the false prophet *are*,[9] and[10] shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

[a] Ver. 3.
[b] Ch. vii. 1.
[c] Ezek. chaps. xxxviii. and xxxix.
[d] Ch. xvi. 14, 16, xix. 19.
[e] Isa. viii. 8.
[f] Dan. xi. 45.
[g] 2 Kin. i. 10, 12, 14.
[h] Ch. xix. 20.

[1] finished [2] come forth [3] corners [4] the war [5] over
[6] *omit* from God [7] deceiveth [8] *add* are also [9] omit *are* [10] *add* they

CONTENTS. The happy pause described from chap. xix. 1 to chap. xx. 6 comes to an end, and we enter upon the sixth leading section of the book. The section extends from chap. xx. 7 to chap. xxii. 5, and its object is to show that, though opposed by so many adversaries and led through so many trials, the saints of God shall at the last be victorious. Their great enemy Satan is completely overthrown, and the new Jerusalem descends from heaven to be their abode of perpetual purity and peace and joy. The first paragraph of this section extends from ver. 7 to ver. 10 of the present chapter. It contains a new and final assault upon the saints; but the assault is at once and ignominiously defeated.

Ver. 7. **And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.** The meaning of the first clause of this verse cannot be properly discussed until, in some closing remarks on the chapter, we resume consideration of the whole question of what we are to understand by 'the thousand years.' Meanwhile, therefore, it is enough to mark the fact that Satan is represented as loosed out of the prison to which he had been consigned in ver. 3, in order that he may practise that work of 'deception' on 'the nations' which had been alluded to in ver. 2.

Ver. 8. **And shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war.** 'Gog and Magog' are in apposition with 'the nations,' so that the two names represent the same thing. There is thus a slight difference between the use of these terms here and in Ezekiel (chaps. xxxviii. xxxix.), where Gog is the prince of Magog, and Magog is the nation ruled by him. In the prophecy of Ezekiel the names are applied to a prince and a people coming from a distance,—apparently the North (chap. xxxix. 2),—fierce, rapacious, and cruel. It is not necessary to inquire what particular

people this may be, although they are generally regarded as the nations north of the Caucasus. Enough that, wherever they dwell, they are the enemies of God, that they march against Israel after the latter has been established in its own land, and that they are overthrown with a swift and terrible and final destruction. They thus afford a suitable type for the last enemies of the Church, who have come up against her, and are destroyed.—These enemies are described as being 'in the four corners of the earth.' The expression meets us in chap. vii. 1, where the four angels, who hold back the winds until the servants of God are sealed, stand upon the four corners of the earth: and, as this is the only other passage where the word occurs in the Apocalypse, we must take it along with us in our effort to ascertain the meaning. Two things may be noticed in connection with it: (1) That the corners of the earth presuppose a centre from which they are distinct; (2) That, though thus distinct from the centre, the powers emanating from them influence the whole earth, and are not confined to the corners, for it is said in chap. vii. 1 that the angels held back not the winds of the corners but the winds 'of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth nor on the sea nor on any tree.' In precise accordance with this, it is stated here that when the nations came up from these four corners they 'went up over the breadth of the earth;' they covered it all. It is thus impossible to think of mere remote, barbarous, and unknown tribes in contrast with the civilised nations of the world. Nothing less can be in the writer's view than all the heathen, *including* nations the most cultured and the most civilised. Such too is the meaning of the words 'the nations' not only in the New Testament generally, but in this particular book. In short, we have before us a fresh illustration of the idea which seems to underlie the whole Apocalypse, that the history of Christ is repeated in the history of the Church. After the pause in John xiii.–xvii. there is a fresh and final outbreak of opposition to Jesus, in which the Roman power is peculiarly active. Now, after the pause of the thousand years, there is a fresh outbreak of opposition against the saints, in which the heathen play the prominent part.—These 'nations' assemble under the leadership of Satan, of whom it is said that he comes forth out of his prison 'to deceive the nations, to gather them together to the war.' The deception is not the general deception practised by Satan over the hearts of men, and continued during the whole period of human history. It is one act of deception committed at the last, and consisting of the particular influence referred to.—**The number of whom is as the sand of the sea.** The common biblical expression for innumerable hosts.

Ver. 9. **And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about and the beloved city.** The two appellations here used are evidently intended to express only two different aspects of the same thing, although we are probably to think of the camp not as within the city, but as round about it and defending it (comp. Ps. xxxiv. 7). 'The beloved city' can be no other than Jerusalem, and this is allowed by all commentators. But it is neither the new Jerusalem, which has not yet come down from heaven, nor the actual city of that name, which is supposed by many to play 'so glorious a part' in the latter days. It is in the nature of things impossible that such enormous hosts should encompass one small city. The whole, too, is a vision, and must be symbolically understood. As 'the nations' denote the enemies, 'the beloved city' denotes the people, of God; and surely not a select number, but *all* the 'saints;' all to whom the term 'Jerusalem' in its best sense may be properly applied. It was in a similar sense that in chap. xiv. 1 the 144,000 stood upon Mount Zion, and that in chap. xiv. 20 the slaughter took place 'without the city.'—**And fire came down out of heaven and devoured them.** The destruction is complete even without mention of a battle being fought (comp. 1 John v. 4). The imagery is taken from Ezek. xxxviii. 22, xxxix. 6, with allusion also to such a destruction as that of 2 Kings i. 10, 12, 14.

Ver. 10. **And the devil that deceiveth them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.** The last great enemy of the Church is now overcome and destroyed as the beast and the false prophet have already been (chap. xix. 20). He is cast into the lake of fire, where all three are tormented for ever and ever. It is presupposed in this everlasting torment that they have made their final and unchangeable choice of evil. This is indicated in the words 'that deceiveth,' the present tense leading us to the thought of the essential character, not the present action, of the great enemy of man.

CHAPTER XX. 11–15.

The Final Judgment.

11 AND I saw a great white [a] throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the [b] earth and the heaven fled away; 12 and there was found [c] no place for them. And I saw the [d] dead, small and great,[1] stand [2] before God;[3] and the [4] [e] books were opened: and another book was opened, which is [f] *the book*

[a] Mat. xxv. 31.
[b] Ch. vi. 14, xvi. 20.
[c] Dan. ii. 35.
[d] Ch. xi. 18, xx. 5.
[e] Dan. vii. 10.
[f] Ps. lxix. 28.

[1] the great and the small [2] standing [3] the throne [4] *omit* the

of life: and the dead were judged out of those [5] things which
13 were written in the books, according to their works. And the
sea gave up the dead which were in it; and [f] death and hell [6] [g] Ch. vi. 8.
delivered [7] up the dead which were in them: and they were
14 [h] judged every man [8] according to their works. And death and [h] Jo. v. 29.
hell [6] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the [i] second [i] Ch. xxi. 8.
15 death.[9] And whosoever [10] was not found written in the [k] book [k] Ch. xiii. 8, xvii. 8
of life was [11] cast into the lake of fire.

[5] the [6] Hades [7] gave [8] each one
[9] *add* even the lake of fire [10] And if any one [11] he was

CONTENTS. The vision before us contains an account of the last judgment, and it will be well to examine it before endeavouring to determine more particularly the meaning of the thousand years spoken of in the first vision of this chapter.

Ver. 11. **And I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.** The throne that is seen is 'great,' not so much in contrast with the thrones of ver. 4, as in correspondence with the Great Being who sits upon it. It is also 'white,' emblematic of His perfect purity and righteousness. He that sits upon it is Christ, not God, although we may remember that Christ is the revelation of God, and the Doer of the Father's will. From before His face the earth and the heavens flee away, *i.e.*, they are completely removed, time and earth and all that belongs to them coming to an end. Similar descriptions, although not so complete, have already met us at chaps. vi. 14 and xvi. 20.

Ver. 12. **And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened.** Is this a general judgment? Such is the view generally, though not always, taken. All the dead, not only the wicked, but (as some think) certain classes of the righteous who had had no part in the 'first resurrection,' or (as others think) the righteous without exception, are supposed to be included. It is thought that the literal reign of a thousand years had preceded the final determination of the state of any whether good or bad; that this reign is over; and that all, whether they have had a share in its blessedness or not, must now take their stand before the judgment-seat of God, that they may be judged by what they have done. But St. John speaks of 'the dead,' and we have already seen that that word is used by him of the wicked only (comp. on ver. 5 and on chap. xi. 18). Such seems to be his meaning here; and that it is so will be abundantly confirmed as we proceed. Nor is the amplification of the term 'the dead' by means of 'the great and the small' at variance with the idea that the class so described is limited. Similar, at times even greater, amplifications occur elsewhere in connection with classes which the context undeniably confines to one class whether of the wicked or the good (chaps. xi. 18, xiii. 16, xix. 5, 18). The 'dead,' therefore, are here the wicked alone; and the 'books' contain a record of no deeds but theirs. The 'books' are indeed expressly distinguished from 'the book of life.'— **And another book was opened which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books according to their works.** The words 'another book' show that this book is quite distinct from the 'books' before mentioned, and that 'the books' now spoken of are the 'books' of the previous clause. It is indeed possible to conceive that the deeds of the righteous as well as of the wicked (names of persons being necessarily associated with them) may be contained in the 'books,' while the 'book of life' may at the same time contain a second list of the righteous alone. But this notion of two lists of the righteous seems in a high degree improbable, and the natural conclusion from the words before us is that what are spoken of as the 'books,' in distinct contrast with 'the book of life,' contain nothing but the names of the wicked and their works. The latter, too, are obviously the only books out of which *judgment* is pronounced. There is not the slightest indication that the 'book of life' was opened for judgment. The only purpose for which it is used is that mentioned in ver. 15. It will be observed, moreover, that no 'works' are referred to except those of the wicked. So far, therefore, from being led by a 'vicious literalism' to confine the judgment before us to the wicked, such an interpretation appears, at least as far as we have come, to be demanded by a plain and natural exegesis of the text.

Ver. 13. **And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them, and they were judged each one according to their works.** By the 'sea' it is impossible to understand the ocean. The word meets us many times in the Apocalypse; but, when it is used absolutely as here, without anything to suggest a contrast to the land, it is evidently figuratively used, as the emblem of the troubled and evil world (see chaps. xiii. 1, xxi. 1). On this ground, and because associated with death and Hades, it must be regarded not as the ocean, in which many of the saints have perished, but as one of the sources whence the wicked come to judgment. Of the sense again in which 'death' and 'Hades' are to be understood we have the best illustration in chap. vi. 8, where the former rides upon the pale horse and is followed by the latter. In that passage both 'death' and 'Hades' are the enemies of men; both are one of the judgments that come upon the world, so that they are not neutral powers, but powers exercising sway over the wicked, and having only the wicked under their control. This is absolutely established by

the fact stated in the next verse, that both are cast into the lake of fire,—not simply brought to an end, but punished with the same punishment which had already been meted out to the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

Ver. 14. **And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire.** The first part of this verse has been spoken of. The second part explains that the second death is 'the lake of fire,' clearly showing that the second death is a *state*. It is the state of those who have chosen and confirmed to themselves the death which came upon man by sin, from which Christ redeems, but which becomes to those who wilfully reject His redemption a still more fearful, even the second, death.

Ver. 15. **And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.** Here then is the purpose, and the only one, for which 'the book of life' is spoken of as used at the judgment before us. It was searched in order that it might be seen if any one's name was *not* written in it; and he whose name could not be discovered in its pages was cast into the lake of fire. For a carefulness of expression very similar to that of these words see John x. 16 and note.

From all that has been said it will be apparent that the judgment now described is not a general judgment, but one on the wicked only. The first view is no doubt that which most naturally suggests itself to the reader of the passage, until he examines more particularly the expressions that are employed, and calls to mind the whole style of thought exhibited in this book. But (1) The thought of a general judgment breaks the continuity of the scene. The passage, as a whole, is occupied with judgment upon the enemies of the Church. The interposition of a judgment, and consequent reward, of the righteous disturbs the even flow of the description: (2) It is very difficult to imagine that those who have already reigned with Christ in the thousand years, and to whom judgment either relating to themselves or over others has been 'given' (ver. 4), should now be placed at the judgment bar: (3) Add to all this the use and meaning in St. John's writings of such words as 'the dead,' 'judged,' 'the sea,' 'death,' and 'Hades,'—and it appears impossible to adopt any other conclusion than that in the vision now before us we have a judgment of the wicked, and not a general judgment.

THE REIGN OF THE THOUSAND YEARS.

We have now examined the various topics mentioned in the separate clauses of chap. xx. with the exception of 'the thousand years.' It is impossible, however, to pass from the chapter without devoting some attention to this point. No subject referred to in the New Testament has more agitated the Church throughout all her history. Upon none has greater diversity o. opinion or greater keenness of feeling been displayed; and there is none on which, alike for our individual comfort and for the sake of our general estimate of Scripture, it is more desirable to gain, if possible, a clear and definite conception. The writer of this Commentary is more particularly desirous to offer a few considerations upon the point because, so long ago as August 1871, he was led to take a view of the thousand years which, as far as known to him, had not been previously suggested, and which seemed to remove in a manner consistent with fair interpretation the chief difficulties of the subject. Since that time the most important conclusion then arrived at has been brought forward, though apparently as the result of his own independent investigations, by Kliefoth, in the second part of his Commentary on the Apocalypse, A.D. 1874. Kliefoth's interpretation of the passage as a whole is indeed entirely different from that adopted here, but upon the particular point of the thousand years he and the present writer are at one. Such a fact may help to propitiate the reader in favour of what has now to be said.

Before again suggesting the solution referred to, it will be well to devote a few sentences to two views, one or other of which is generally accepted as upon the whole the best explanation of the apostle's meaning. The first of these is that a lengthened period of prosperity and happiness for the Church of Christ on earth is to intervene between the close of the present Dispensation and the general Judgment. Almost everything indeed connected with this period is matter of dispute among those who accept the main idea,—its length, the proportion of believers who shall be partakers of its glory, the condition in which they are to live, the work in which they are to be engaged, the relation in which the exalted Redeemer is to stand to them. These differences of detail it is impossible to discuss as if they were so many separate theories, but the more important will be noticed as we proceed. The second explanation demanding notice is that which supposes the thousand years to be a figure for the whole Christian age from the First to the Second Coming of the Lord.

Turning to the first of these explanations, it would seem as if the difficulties surrounding it were nearly, if not wholly, insurmountable.

(1) If we interpret the thousand years literally, it will be a solitary example of a literal use of numbers in the Apocalypse, and this objection alone is fatal. If, on the other hand, we regard the thousand years as denoting an indefinite period, the difficulties of doing so are hardly less formidable. The numbers of the Apocalypse may be symbolical, but they are always definite in meaning. They express ideas it is true, but the ideas are distinct. They may belong to a region of thought different from that with which arithmetical numbers are concerned, but within that region we cannot change the numerical value of the numbers used without at the same time changing the thought. Thus the thousand years cannot mean two thousand or ten thousand or twenty thousand years, as the necessities of the case may demand. If they are a measure of time, the measure must be fixed, and we ought to be able to explain the principles leading us to attach to it a value different from that which it naturally possesses.

(2) It is impossible to form any reasonable conception of the condition of the saints during the thousand years. Multitudes of them must have risen from their graves through Him who is 'the first-fruits of them that sleep;' those who were alive at the beginning of the thousand years must have been 'changed.' This is admitted by such as hold the theory: Believers raised, however, are raised 'in glory,' and we have the absolutely inconceivable spectacle presented to us of glorified saints living in a world which has not yet received

its own glorification, and is thus completely unfitted for their residence. Nor is the difficulty lessened by adopting the supposition that only the Holy Land and Jerusalem shall be transfigured, for we cannot imagine one part of the earth transfigured without the rest, and the part chosen for this purpose is far too small to accommodate those who are supposed to occupy it. Still greater difficulties meet us when we think of the relations existing between the saints thus glorified and 'the nations.' It is not easy to gather together in a single sentence the various ideas upon this point of those who hold the view of which we speak; and it may be enough to say that 'the nations' are generally regarded as either subject to the saints, and ruled by them in peace, or as the objects of their missionary enterprise. They are thus either harmless innocents, the absence of Satan preventing all combination and organized manifestation of evil, or they are peculiarly accessible to the grandeur of the spectacle which they behold in the glorified Saviour and His people. It is needless to say that for all this, and much more of a similar kind, there is absolutely not the slightest foundation in the apostle's words. Indeed the total absence of any mention of relations between the saints and 'the nations' until we come to ver. 7 is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the vision. Evidently the Seer has no thought of any complex state of matters such as would spring out of the long dwelling together of these different classes. Or, if there is to be a fresh duration of existence, is there also to be another probation for 'the nations,' a Gospel preached under circumstances very different from what we have known, and constituting a new Dispensation, while yet there is the *same* judgment at the end, and the conditions for entrance into happiness or woe continue as before?

(3) The great difficulty, however, presented by this view of the millennium arises from the teaching of Scripture elsewhere upon the points involved in it. If we suppose that the saints who are made partakers of millennial glory are a selected company, we introduce a distinction between different classes of believers unknown to the word of God, in which all believers enjoy the same privileges on earth, share the same hope, and are at length rewarded with the same inheritance. Even if we reject such distinctions, we are not entitled to separate between believers and unbelievers, for it cannot be denied that the New Testament always brings the *Parousia* and the general judgment into the closest possible connection. When Christ comes again, it is to perfect the happiness of all His saints, and to make all His enemies His footstool (Matt. xxv. 31–46; John v. 28, 29; Acts xvii. 31; Rom. ii. 16; 1 Thess. iv. 17; 2 Thess. i. 5–7; 2 Pet. iii. 8–13). The teaching of the Apocalypse itself in other passages corresponds with this (chaps. iii. 20, 21, xi. 17, 18). The idea of masses of the nations continuing to be Christ's enemies for years or ages after He has come is not only entirely novel, but is at variance with everything we are taught by the other sacred writers upon the point.

The same remark may be made with regard to the two resurrections (in whatever particular form we imagine them to take place) which are separated from each other by a thousand years. We have already seen indeed that the simple exegesis of the passage disproves this idea, and that the 'first resurrection' is a *state*, not an *act*. But, apart from this, the New Testament knows only of one, and that a general, resurrection (John v. 28, 29), and the passages usually quoted as containing partial indications of the opposite, such as 1 Cor. xv. 23, 24, 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, to which we shall afterwards advert, fail to support the conclusion drawn from them. The resurrection of believers takes place at 'the last day' (John vi. 40).

Again, the idea that before the end the Church shall enjoy a long period of prosperity and rest on earth with Christ in her midst, is inconsistent with that teaching of Scripture which seems distinctly to imply that her history down to the close of her pilgrimage shall be one of trouble. That this is the meaning of Matt. xxiv. can hardly be disputed, and the argument from that chapter is the stronger because the discourse of Christ contained in it lies at the bottom of the Apocalypse, and the writer of the latter could not contradict the very authority upon which his delineation is grounded. Or, if it be said that Christ is only to come personally at the end of this time of joy, what can be the meaning of the exhortations addressed to us to wait and long for His Second Coming? We ought rather to wait and long for the millennial bliss.

The second interpretation of which it is necessary to say a few words is that which understands by the thousand years the whole Christian age from the First to the Second Coming of Christ. That there is an element of truth in this view we shall see by and by; but, looking at it in the form in which it is usually presented, it is not possible to accept it. The number one thousand is inappropriate to the purpose to which it is applied. The period in question has already been made known to us as three and a half years. To make it one thousand years now is to throw everything into confusion. Still further, the place of the book in which the vision is found is unsuitable to this view. No doubt the Seer is in the habit of recapitulating. But the thousand years' reign forms part of a series of visions designed to point out the nature of the Church's victory *after her warfare is concluded*. We cannot separate it from the visions of chap. xix., and these certainly belong to the end. Again, the 'reign' of one thousand years is obviously granted not to the generation of believers only who are alive at the coming of the Lord, but to all who have been faithful unto death; and none of these have lived through the whole Christian Dispensation. Once more, we cannot speak of Satan as bound and shut up in the abyss during the whole period of the Church's history. That there is a sense in which he is so as regards the righteous must be allowed, but his action upon the ungodly, upon 'the nations,' has never ceased. He has been their betrayer and destroyer in every age. When he was cast out of heaven he was 'cast down to the earth,' and there he persecuted the woman 'for a time, and times, and half a time' (chap. xii. 9, 14). Our Lord teaches us to pray, 'Deliver us from the evil one' (Matt. vi. 13). This view, too, equally with the last considered, perplexes our ideas as to what is to happen when the Christian Dispensation has run its course. At this point the thousand years expire; and, as they have been understood of time, it becomes necessary to allow some additional space of time for the closing war. We are thus brought into

fresh conflict with other statements of Scripture relating to the same subject. The second proposed solution is not more satisfactory than the first.

It was in these circumstances that the writer of this Commentary offered many years ago what seemed to him the true solution of the question of the millennial reign—*that the thousand years are not a period of time at all.* They represent that victory of the Lord over Satan which is shared by His people in Him, and they complete the picture of that glorious condition in which believers have all along really been, but which only now reaches its highest point, and is revealed as well as possessed. The saints 'died' when they believed, and entered into a Divine life, but one 'hid with Christ in God.' At the manifestation of Christ at His Second Coming they also are 'manifested with Him in glory' (Col. iii. 3, 4). Such is the leading thought.

That 'years' may be taken in this sense there can be no doubt. In Ezek. xxxix. 9 it is said that the inhabitants of the cities of Israel shall prevail against the enemies described, and 'shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the hand-staves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire *seven years*'—*i.e.*, they shall utterly destroy them, not a vestige shall be left. Again, at the twelfth verse of the same chapter, when the prophet speaks of the burying of 'Gog and all his multitude,' he says, 'And *seven months* shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land;' where the expression marks only the thoroughness with which the land should be cleansed from every remnant of heathenish impurity. The use of 'years' in the passage before us seems to be exactly similar; and the probability that it is so rises almost to certainty when we remember that, as proved by the vision of Gog and Magog in the subsequent part of the chapter, this prophecy of Ezekiel is before the Seer's eyes, constituting the foundation upon which his whole delineation rests.

Viewed in this light then, the thousand years, when connected with the binding of Satan, represent the completeness of his overthrow: when connected with the reign of the saints they represent their confirmation in happiness, their establishment in the joy just about to be revealed in fulness, the *manifestation* of their blessedness to the eyes of all men, when even their enemies shall see that they are safe for ever, and shall follow them with longing eyes as they enter within the gates of the New Jerusalem (comp. chap. iii. 9). They are simply an exalted symbol of the glory of the redeemed at the particular moment referred to by the Seer. Even before this time indeed, and throughout the whole of their struggle with the world, they have enjoyed in principle all that is now bestowed upon them; and herein lies the element of truth belonging to that interpretation which sees in the thousand years the Christian era as it extends from the First to the Second Advent of the Redeemer. During all that period the children of God have not only been sealed, watched over, nourished by their Heavenly Guardians: they have constituted a Resurrection people, living in the power of Christ's resurrection and of their own resurrection life. They have rested upon a risen and glorified Redeemer, and they have been seated with Him in 'the heavenly places.' Their Lord Himself had been always triumphant: at the opening of the first seal He had gone forth 'conquering and to conquer' (chap. vi. 2), and in every song of praise, raised by the heavenly hosts the Church and universal nature, which meets us in the book, His had been 'the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever' (chap. v. 13, comp. chaps. vii. 12, xi. 15, xv. 3, xix. 7). In this triumph of Christ the saints on earth, as well as the saints in heaven, have their share. For this end was Christ manifested, that from His Incarnation onward 'He might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John iii. 8). He Himself said when He was on earth, '*Now* is the judgment of this world; *now* shall the prince of this world be cast out' (John xii. 31). He declared that 'the prince of this world *hath been* judged' (John xvi. 11). He gave His disciples reason to hope that they could 'bind the strong man' (Matt. xii. 29); He said that they had 'authority' from Him 'to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy' (Luke x. 19); and He allowed them a foretaste and experience of this authority in their healings of those who were possessed with demons. There is an unquestionable sense, therefore, in which for the true children of God from the beginning of the Christian era Satan always has been, and still is, bound. He is beneath their feet. For them as members of the Body of Christ his head is bruised. Still the fact remains, that their state in this book has been described as one of tribulation. The object of the passage before us is to show that there is another side to the picture, and that that side, long hidden, shall be at length revealed. Just as in the earthly life of Jesus there came a time when, His struggle over, His glory shone forth in the presence of His disciples, and He spoke as one already glorified (John xvii.), so there comes a time when His people shall shine forth in the glory which they have received from Him. This is the reign of a thousand years.

It may be said that the words of ver. 7, which speak of the thousand years being 'finished,' together with the subsequent outbreak of the devil and the nations against the Church, are inconsistent with the view now taken. The difficulty thus suggested is specious, but by no means insuperable. Let us familiarize ourselves with the idea that the 'thousand years,' regarded simply as an expression, may denote completeness, thoroughness, either of defeat or victory. Above all let us place ourselves in the position of the Seer, and catch as far as possible the spirit in which he writes. We shall then have little difficulty in seeing that the loosing of Satan at the end of the thousand years is not to be understood literally. *It is a mere incident necessary to give verisimilitude to the poetic delineation.* The prophet has described Satan as completely subjugated; but the whole evil of the earth is once more to be presented to us gathered together against the saints. Satan, the head of its kingdom, the prince of this world, must be there that he may direct its energies and share its fate. For this purpose it is needful that he shall be spoken of as loosed. The loosing, then, is not chronological, not historical; it is only poetic, designed to give consistency to the prophet's vision.

Let us apply this principle to the passage

already quoted from Ezek. xxxix. 9, by supposing that the prophet, immediately after saying, 'And they shall burn them with fire seven years,' had desired to mention some other circumstance that then took place, or some other vision that followed the complete destruction of the weapons of war referred to. Would he not have gone on, 'And when the seven years were finished,' etc.? Is not such a method of expression involved in the very nature of the previous figure? The figure itself may be a strange one. That is not the question. It is simply whether, *having been used*, its use does not naturally draw along with it the method of expression subsequently employed.

Besides this, it ought to be remembered that there must be a struggle before the exalted Saviour, with His people as assessors, finally destroys His adversaries. We cannot suppose that these do not resist the fate which they see prepared for them. They shall rouse themselves to a last effort of argument and despair (Matt. xxv. 24, 44; Isa. viii. 21); but it will be a last despair, the final effort of the serpent to sting when it is in the strong hand of Him whom it is powerless to resist. Finally, it may be said that time is necessary for all this. We reply that it is not time that is thought of but *succession*, and all Scripture implies that in these events there is succession, although not with a long interval intervening. What 1 Cor. xv. 23, 24, and 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, teach is no more than is taught in the delineation of the last judgment contained in Matt. xxv. 31–46,—that the eternal condition of the righteous is determined *before* that of the wicked. There must be a succession in order to enable us to form any conception of the matter. But no sooner is the one sentence pronounced, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,' than the other follows, 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels:' 'And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.'

It is true that by the view now taken the Millennium, as it is called, is resolved into a figure of speech. The argument of this note is that St. John intended it to be so, and that the meaning found by us in the passage is that which it was the purpose of the Apostle to convey. It is the true historical interpretation of what he says; and the idea of any millennial reign of Jesus and His saints between the end of this present dispensation and the beginning of eternity ought to be dismissed from our minds.

Before closing this note it may be well to remind the reader that the great Christian creeds present the same striking *exclusion* of the Millennium which is to be found both in the passage that we have been considering and in all the other Scripture notices of the Lord's Second Coming.—'From whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead' (Apostles' Creed); 'Ascended into heaven; shall come to judge the quick and the dead' (Nicene Creed); 'And shall come again with glory to judge the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end' (Constantinopolitan Creed); 'At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies' (Athanasian Creed).

To the same effect is the language of the Westminster Confession, 'At the last day, such as are found alone shall not die, but be changed; *and all the dead* shall be raised up' (chap. xxxii. 11); while the Larger Catechism is still more definite, 'Immediately after the resurrection shall follow the general and final judgment of angels and men' (Qu. 88).

CHAPTER XXI. 1–27.

The New Heavens and the New Earth; and the New Jerusalem.

1 AND I saw a [a] new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there
2 was no more [b] sea.[1] And I John[2] saw the holy city, new [c] Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,[3] prepared
3 as a [d] bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven[4] saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will[5] [e] dwell[6] [f] with them, and they shall be his people,[7] and God himself[8] shall be with them, *and be*[9] their
4 God. And God[10] shall wipe away all [g] tears[11] from their eyes; and there shall be no more [h] death,[12] neither[13] sorrow,[14] nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:[15] for[16] the

[a] Isa. lxv. 17; 2 Pet. iii. 13.
[b] Ch. xx. 13.
[c] Ch. iii. 12; Gal. iv. 26.
[d] Isa. lxi. 10.
[e] Zech. viii. 8; Jo. i. 14.
[f] Mat. i. 23.
[g] Ch. vii. 17; Isa. lxv. 19.
[h] 1 Cor. xv. 54.

[1] and the sea was no more
[2] *omit* John
[3] out of heaven, from God
[4] the throne
[5] shall
[6] tabernacle
[7] peoples
[8] and he himself, even God with them,
[9] *omit* with them, *and be*
[10] he
[11] every tear
[12] and death shall be no more
[13] *add* shall there be
[14] mourning
[15] nor pain, any more
[16] *omit* for

5 former[17] things are passed away. And he that sat[16] upon the
throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said[19]
unto me,[20] *g* Write: for these words are true and faithful.[21] *g* Ch. xix. 9.
6 And he said unto me, *h* It is done.[22] I am[23] *i* Alpha and[23] *h* Ch. xvi. 17.
Omega, the[24] beginning and the end. I will [25]give unto him *i* Ch. i. 8, xxii. 13.
7 that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He [25] Jo. iv. 14.
that overcometh shall inherit all[26] things; and I will be his
8 God, and he shall be my *k* son. But[28] the fearful, and un- *k* 2 Cor. vi. 18.
believing, and the[26] abominable, and murderers, and whore-
mongers,[27] and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall
have[28] their part[29] in the lake which[30] burneth with fire and
9 brimstone: which is the *l* second death. And there came unto *l* Ch. xx. 14.
me[31] *m* one of the seven angels which[32] had the seven vials[33] *m* Ch. xvii. 1.
full of[34] the seven last plagues, and talked[35] with me, saying,
10 Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And
he carried me away in the *n* spirit to a great and high *o* moun- *n* Ch. xvii. 3.
tain, and showed me that great *p* city,[36] the holy[37] Jerusalem, *o* Mat. iv. 8.
11 descending out of heaven from God, having the [38]glory of God: *p* Ezek. xlviii. *q* Jo. i. 14, xvii. 22.
and[38] her [39]light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even[39] *r* Phil. ii. 15.
12 like[40] a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and[41] had[42] a [37]wall *s* Zech. ii. 5.
great and high, *and*[43] had[44] twelve *t* gates, and at the gates *t* Ezek. xlviii. 31.
twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names*
13 of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three
gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates;
14 and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had
twelve *u* foundations, and in[45] them the[46] names of the twelve *u* Heb. xi. 10.
15 *x* apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked[47] with me had[48] *x* Eph. ii. 20.
a golden *y* reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and *y* Ezek. xl. 3.
16 the wall thereof. And the city lieth four-square, and the
length[49] is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city
with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the
17 breadth and the height of it are *z* equal. And he measured *z* Cp. 1 Kin. vi. 20.
the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, *accord-*
18 *ing to* the measure of a *a* man, that is, of the[50] angel. And the *a* Ch. xiii. 18; Heb. ii. 16.
building of the wall of it was *of*[51] *b* jasper: and the city *was* *b* Ver. 11.
19 pure gold, like unto clear[52] glass. And[53] the foundations of
the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious
c stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; *c* Ezek. xxviii. 13.

[17] first [18] sitteth [19] saith [20] *omit* unto me
[21] faithful and true [22] They are come to pass [23] *add* the
[24] these [25] *add* for [26] *omit* the [27] fornicators
[28] *omit* shall have [29] *add* shall be [30] that [31] *omit* unto me
[32] who [33] bowls, [34] who were laden with [35] he spake
[36] *omit* that great city [37] *add* city [38] *omit* and
[39] *omit* even [40] as it were [41] *omit* and [42] having
[43] omit *and* [44] having [45] on [46] twelve
[47] spake [48] *add* for a measure [49] *add* thereof
[50] an [51] omit *of* [52] pure [53] *omit* And

20 the third, a [54] chalcedony; the fourth, an [55] emerald; the fifth,
sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the
eighth, beryl; the ninth, a [54] topaz; the tenth, a [54] chryso-
prasus; the eleventh, a [54] jacinth; the twelfth, an [55] amethyst.
21 And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate
was of one [f] pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, [f] Mat. xiii. 46.
22 as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein:
for the [g] Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple [g] 2 Cor. xv. 28.
23 of it. And the city had [56] no need of the sun, neither of the
moon, to shine in [57] it: for the glory of God did [h] lighten it, [h] Isa. lx. 19.
24 and the Lamb *is* the light [58] thereof. And the nations of them
which are saved [59] shall [i] walk in [60] the light of it: and the [i] Isa. ii. 2-5.
[k] kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour [61] into it. [k] Ps. lxxii. 10, 11; Isa. xlix. 7, 23.
25 And the [l] gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there [l] Isa. lx. 11.
26 shall be no night there. And they shall [m] bring the glory and [m] Ps. xlv. 12.
27 honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise
enter into it any thing that [62] [n] defileth, [63] neither *whatsoever* [n] Isa. lii. 1.
worketh [64] abomination, or [65] *maketh* [66] a lie: but they [67] which
are [o] written in the Lamb's book of life. [o] Ch. xiii. 8, xvii. 8.

[54] *omit* a [55] *omit* an [56] hath [57] upon [58] lamp
[59] *omit* of them which are saved [60] by [61] *omit* and honour
[62] *omit* that [63] unclean [64] or he that maketh an [65] and
[66] omit *maketh* [67] *add* only

CONTENTS. All the enemies of God have now been vanquished, and nothing remains but to perfect the happiness and glory of the redeemed in their eternal home. To the description, accordingly, of this home the chapter now before us is devoted.

Ver. 1. It is a new heaven and a new earth that the Seer beholds, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. Yet it is not necessary to think of an entirely new creation, as if the first had disappeared, and a second were called into existence by a fresh creative act of the Almighty. The last clause of the verse, and the sea was no more, is itself at variance with any supposition of the kind; for, had the old heavens and earth been literally extinguished, the sea would have shared their fate, and no special mention of it would have been required. The same conclusion is to be drawn from the word used by St. John to mark the fact that the heavens and the earth which he now saw were 'new.' Two words are employed in the New Testament to express the idea of newness, the one bringing prominently forward the thought of a recent introduction into existence (as in the case of young persons), the other of that freshness or continuing greenness of quality which may belong even to what is old. In this latter sense the body of our Lord was laid in a 'new tomb,' in a tomb not it may be recently prepared, but which, because no man had as yet been laid in it, retained that quality of freshness by which it was fitted for Him who could see no corruption. In like manner the 'tongues' referred to in Mark xvi. 17 are described by the same word for 'new.' In one sense old, they were devoted to a new purpose, enabled to express the mysteries of a new and higher state of being. The 'heavens,' the 'earth,' and the 'Jerusalem' here spoken of are in this sense 'new.' They are the 'new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness' (2 Pet. iii. 13).—The meaning of the last clause of this verse is difficult to determine. But it seems clear that we are not to understand the words in their literal acceptation. We must seek the solution of the difficulty in that meaning of the word 'sea' which we have found it necessary to apply in almost every passage of this book where we have met it. The 'sea' is not the ocean; it is the emblem of the ungodly. It connects itself with the thought of restlessness, disorder, and sin. These shall be excluded from the better and higher state of the redeemed in their abode of future blessedness.

Ver. 2. The Apostle beholds the metropolis of the renovated world under the figure of that metropolis which was so intimately associated with the memories and aspirations of the people of God, a New Jerusalem. Her newness will be afterwards more particularly described, but even now we are told enough to convey to us a lofty idea of her grandeur and beauty. She comes down out of heaven, from God, and she is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Is there not a reminiscence in the word 'prepared' of that great promise in John xiv. 3 which the apostle who saw this vision was to record? The Bridegroom is now the 'Husband' (comp. 'wife' in ver. 9).

Ver. 3. The Seer next hears a great voice out

of the throne. The voice may not be actually that of God Himself, but it certainly expresses the Divine thoughts and purposes.—**Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his peoples, and he himself, even God with them, shall be their God.** The allusion is to the Tabernacle in the wilderness (not the temple), that sacred tent which was the dwelling-place of God in the midst of Israel. That Tabernacle is now 'with men,' no longer with a people separated from the rest of the world but with men at large, for all sin is banished, and they who are alive upon the earth are without exception members of the Divine family. In the next words, especially when viewed in the light of what seems to be the correct translation, it is impossible to mistake the reference to John i. 14, 'The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us,' for it is in Christ Jesus that God dwells with man: in the Son only do we know the Father, the 'only God' (John v. 44). Hence it is said that 'He Himself,' even 'God with them' ('Immanuel, God with us'), shall be their God. He shall no longer be at a distance from them, nor they from Him. No boundary shall be placed around the mount: no cloud shall conceal His glory. As brother dwells with brother, so God incarnate shall dwell with His brethren in one blessed home of holiness and love. From all eternity the Word had been with God (John i. 1); now He is to be to all eternity with men; and men shall be a new Israel for the new Jerusalem (comp. 2 Cor. vi. 11–18 and Lev. xxvi. 12; Zech. viii. 8).

Ver. 4. All the most precious fruits of such a fellowship shall also be experienced. **He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.** Not 'all tears' are spoken of, but 'every tear.' Each single tear they shed shall be wiped away, even before it falls.—**And death shall be no more.** It has been destroyed by Him who 'was dead, and behold, He is alive for evermore' (chap. i. 18); and it can no longer disturb with its terrors, or its separations between the loving and the loved.—**Neither shall there be mourning.** The reference is not to mourning in general, but to wailing for the dead.—**Nor crying, nor pain, any more.** 'Crying' is the acute cry produced by any pain: 'pain' is the burden laid upon us by any woe, especially by such woes as are connected with the toils and sufferings of the present outward world. From all sorrow whether sharp or dull; from all burdens whether proceeding from the body or the mind, the dwellers in the New Jerusalem shall be for ever free. These trials belonged to the *first things*, to the old earth; and the old earth, the 'first things,' has passed away.

Ver. 5. What the Seer had before heard regarding the new creation had proceeded from a voice 'out of the throne' (ver. 3). Now God Himself, **he that sitteth on the throne,** speaks. For the first time in this book the direct voice of God is heard. Hitherto He has been veiled in His own unspeakable majesty and glory, watching indeed with the deepest interest the fortunes of His Church, overruling all things for her good, but Himself unseen, unheard. Now He breaks His silence; and, as One who dwells with men (ver. 4), directs their thoughts to the accomplishment of His own holy and gracious will. His words are, **I make all things new,** where the emphasis rests upon the word 'new:' 'Old things are passed away; behold, they are become new' (2 Cor. v. 17).—It is possible that the next words spoken in this verse, **Write; for these words are faithful and true,** may be the voice not of God, but of an angel. As no angel, however, has been spoken of in the preceding verses, and as the words now uttered are properly a parenthesis indicating the deep interest of the Almighty in His people, there is no sufficient cause to bring in the interposition of any third party. God Himself says to His servant 'Write,' and Himself assures him not only that His words are 'faithful,' but that they are 'true.' The new heavens and the new earth are the end towards which God has been always working. The whole history of the world, with its opposition to the truth and with the judgments that have overtaken it; the whole history of the Church, with her struggles and victories, has not been accidental. It has been the carrying out of God's 'bright designs' from the moment when He expressed Himself in the works and in the creatures of His hands.

Ver. 6. The voice of God is continued, as He says, **They,** *i.e* the words of ver. 5, **are come to pass.** The future for which the saints of God have longed, and of which the prophets spoke, has come. All expectations are fulfilled; all hopes are realized; the end to which all things pointed is reached. Hence, accordingly, the close connexion of the next words with these, **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.** God is the unchangeable, the everlasting, One; the first cause, the last end, of all things. He must finish that new creation for the coming of which the sins and sorrows of the world have been only the preparatory throes.—**I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.** These words are neither a call nor a promise to labouring and heavy-laden ones in search of rest, and they find their parallel in the words of John iv. 14 rather than of John vii. 37. Those spoken of have already drunk of the living water, and been refreshed by it. Not the longing after salvation, but the longing for a continued and ever deepening participation in its blessings, is expressed by the word 'athirst.' The redeemed not only find their first life in Christ: they draw from Him continually those ever fresh supplies of grace by which they are sustained in spiritual life and joy.

Ver. 7. **He that overcometh** is the same as he that is 'athirst,' and is only viewed in another aspect of his glorious position. In reference to Jesus he is always thirsty; in reference to the world and the devil he is always a conqueror. By the use of the word 'overcometh,' the last part of the Apocalypse is bound closely to its first (comp. the promises in chaps. ii. iii.).—The promise is, **I will be his God, and he shall be my son.** God will be his God, his Father: he will be God's son, enjoying the spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba, Father, and living in that love and confidence which mark a son in a loving father's house and presence.

Ver. 8. The happiness of the saints of God has been described. In contrast with this, the verse before us presents us with the fate of the ungodly, who are classified first in general terms, and then by the particular sins which they commit. The 'fearful' are mentioned first as occupying a position the reverse of them that 'overcome;' they have shrunk from the struggle; they have

yielded to the foe instead of conquering him. Upon the description of the other classes it is unnecessary to dwell. They are such as have chosen the darkness rather than the light; as have loved the lie rather than the truth (John viii. 44); as have deliberately resisted and cast aside the grace that might have been theirs,—their part can be only in **the second death.**

Ver. 9. At chap. xvii. 1 one of the angels that had the seven bowls had come to the Seer and shown him the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters, the mystic Babylon. In like manner one of the same group of angels, but more fully described as one of the seven **who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues,** now shows him the city that was in every respect the contrast of Babylon, not Babylon but the New Jerusalem, not a harlot but **the bride the Lamb's wife.** The fuller description of the angel brings out more completely the fact that the last 'plagues' were over, and that nothing remained to be exhibited to the Seer but the glory of the redeemed in heaven. The combination of the terms 'bride' and 'Lamb's wife' is remarkable. The Church is not only espoused but married to her Lord, yet she remains for ever in a virgin purity.

Ver. 10. The Seer is carried **in the spirit,** for this purpose, **to a great and high mountain.** The object is that he may command a more uninterrupted view of the holy city as she descends in all her glory from heaven to earth. It was from the top of an 'exceeding high mountain' that Satan showed our Lord all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and for a similar purpose, that he may see more clearly the grandeur of the spectacle before his eyes, is St. John elevated to this height. Comparison of Ezek. xl. 2, Isa. ii. 2, and Heb. xii. 22 makes it probable that the city was situated upon the 'mountain,' and we are therefore to understand this word not in the sense of a solitary peak but, as often in the Gospels, in that of a range of mountains where from peak to peak the view is less hampered than in the plain. The harlot in chap. xvii. was a city, Babylon; the Lamb's wife is a city, New Jerusalem.

Ver. 11. The description of the city begins, and first she is spoken of as **having the glory of God.** This light lightens her both within and without. From the subsequent description it appears that the idea of the Holy of Holies is in the Seer's mind, and we cannot therefore be wrong in thinking that the 'glory' which he has in view is that of the Shechinah. By it the Almighty lightened of old the innermost recesses of His sanctuary. By it He now lightens the whole of that glorious abode in which His people dwell with Him.—**Her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal.** The word of the original translated 'light' is rather light-bearer or light-giver, and it refers to the light which the city sheds everywhere around her like the sun or the stars of heaven. It is light of crystalline clearness and purity (comp. chap. iv. 3).

Ver. 12. **Having a wall great and high, having twelve gates.** The walls of ancient cities were for protection against enemies, and of such protection there was no need here. But so important in this respect were walls, that they were associated in the ancient mind with everything that in a city was brave or bold (comp. Ps. xlviii.). Hence the New Jerusalem has not only a wall, but a wall 'great and high.'—It has also **twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels.** The word translated 'gate' is not so much the gate itself as the porch or portal with which it was connected (comp. Matt. xxvi. 71). It includes the gate-tower under which the traveller passes at this day into many an Eastern city. These gates were twelve in number, disposed like the gates of the encampment of Israel around the Tabernacle. The angel at each gate in all probability marks the heavenly protection which is extended by the Almighty to His people, of each of whom it may be said that God 'gives His angels charge concerning' him.—**And names written thereon which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.** These twelve tribes represent the whole people of God, Gentile as well as Jew: and, if so, we have an argument powerfully corroborative of what has been said of the 144,000 sealed 'out of every tribe of the children of Israel' in chap. vii. The figure itself is from Ezek. xlviii. 31.

Ver. 13. The distribution of the gates follows in this verse.

Ver. 14. From the gates we are next taken to the foundations. **And the wall of the city had twelve foundations** (comp. Heb. xi. 10). We are not to think of foundations buried in the earth, but of great and massive stones rising above the soil as a pediment sustaining the whole structure. At the same time we have not before us twelve great foundation-stones going round the city in one line, but twelve courses of stones, 'each course encompassing the city, and constituting one foundation' (see ver. 19).—**And on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** There was one name doubtless on each foundation, but the main point of the figure is that the city rested on the twelve Apostles of our Lord. 1 Cor. iii. 11 is presupposed. The twelve Apostles are 'Apostles of the Lamb,' placed by Him in their several positions, and fulfilling in Him their several functions. It ought to be unnecessary to say a single word in refutation of the idea that St. John would not thus have referred to himself as an Apostle had he really been the author of this book. He is not thinking of himself. He is lost in the magnitude and glory of the apostolic office. Nor is the idea in the least degree better founded that it is St. John's intention, out of hatred to St. Paul, to exclude him from the apostolic office. The whole passage is symbolical; the Jewish imagery could not have admitted thirteen instead of twelve foundations, and St. Paul is no more excluded from the number of Apostles than are Gentile Christians from the happiness of the city.

Ver. 15. The city is to be measured, in order that its noble and fair proportions may be seen. The angel measures it with a **golden reed,** the metal of the reed corresponding in dignity and value to the city itself, which is of 'pure gold' (ver. 18). A measuring reed, though not of gold, is used in Ezek. xl. 3.

Ver. 16. The city itself is first measured. It **lieth four square . . . the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.** It was thus a perfect cube; and, remembering the general imagery of this book, there can be no doubt that the Seer has the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle in his eye. That part of the Taber-

nacle was a cube.—The symbolism which marks the general shape marks also the details, each dimension measuring 12,000 furlongs, 12 the number of the people of God multiplied by 1000 the heavenly number. It is indeed often supposed that the 12,000 furlongs spoken of are the measure of the four sides of the city taken together, in which case each side will measure only 3000 furlongs. But were this view correct, it would be difficult to account for the insertion of the next clause, **And the length thereof is as great as the breadth.** That clause would then anticipate the last clause of the verse, whereas it seems to assign a reason why the breadth alone was actually measured. Nor is it of the smallest moment to reduce the enormous dimensions spoken of. No reduction brings them within the bounds of verisimilitude, and no effort in that direction is required. The idea is alone to be thought of.

Ver. 17. The **wall** is next measured, **an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is of an angel.** It is hardly possible to think that we have here the *height* of the wall. So insignificant would it be when compared with the height of the city that the combination would be unnatural and grotesque. St. John, too, could then hardly have called the wall 'great and high' (ver. 12). The supposition, moreover, that the wall is kept low in order that the glorious light of the city may stream out over it, is inconsistent with the general imagery (comp. also on ver. 18). The wall is a part of the city as strictly as the foundations are, and is itself, like them, radiant with the light which shines forth from the city as a whole. It seems better, therefore, to think here of the breadth of the wall. Its length and height had been measured, and its thickness is now added to complete the description of its strength. The last clause of the verse has occasioned considerable difficulty. The meaning seems to be, that a *human* standard of measurement was used; and it was well to note this. The New Jerusalem is not framed according to angelic ideas or for angelic purposes. It is to be the dwelling-place of men; and even, therefore, when an angel measures it, he measures it 'according to the measure of a man.'

Ver. 18. The measuring has been completed. We have next the materials of which the city was composed. Those of the wall are first mentioned. **And the building of the wall of it was jasper.** We have been already told in ver. 11 that the light shining from the city was like that of a jasper stone. The wall, which was of jasper, must have shone with a like crystalline clearness,—a distinct proof of the falseness of the idea which makes 'the wall' low in order that it may not obstruct the light of the city.—**And the city was pure gold,** the most precious metal known, but in this case transfigured and glorified, for it was **like unto pure glass.**

Vers. 19, 20. The materials of the twelve courses of stones which formed the basement of the city are next mentioned (comp. on ver. 14). They are not merely beautified with precious stones. The words **garnished with all manner of precious stones** might suggest such an idea, but the words that follow immediately correct it. Each course was composed of the particular jewel named.—**The first foundation was jasper,** the clear brilliant stone already mentioned in connection with the 'light of the city' in ver. 11, and with the 'building of the wall' in ver. 18. **The second was sapphire,** a stone of a clear sky-blue colour. **The third was chalcedony,** by which is generally understood a greenish blue emerald. **The fourth was emerald,** of a green colour peculiarly pleasing to the eye (comp. chap. iv. 3). **The fifth was sardonyx,** a form of onyx stone, and of a palish-white. **The sixth was sardius,** a red stone (comp. chap. iv. 3). **The seventh was chrysolite,** a stone highly esteemed among the ancients, of a colour that was golden yellow. **The eighth was beryl,** a green-coloured stone. **The ninth was topaz,** a stone the leading colour of which was green, but modified by yellow. **The tenth was chrysoprasus,** a stone of greenish hue. **The eleventh was jacinth,** a stone of a yellow amber colour. **The twelfth was amethyst,** a violet blue stone. Some uncertainty attaches to the identification of each of these stones, but to the interpreter who would catch the idea of the Seer this uncertainty is of little moment. Two things are especially noteworthy in regard to them when they are taken as a whole. (1) All are precious, fitly representing the splendour of the celestial city. (2) All are different from each other, though they blend into a harmonious unity. The glorious light of the Divine presence streams through many colours, and each course of precious stones retains beneath the common light which all give forth its own individual excellence and beauty.

Ver. 21. Having described the foundations, the Apostle now passes to the gates and street of the city. **And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl.** No attempt is made to attain verisimilitude. It is enough that the figure helps to bring out the surpassing splendour.—**And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.** We are probably not to think of only one street, for a city so large, and with so many gates, must have had many streets. But it is unnecessary to dwell upon them all. Each is of the same material as the rest, and all are of gold, but, as in ver. 18, of gold transfigured and glorified.

Ver. 22. The glory of the city is illustrated by other facts. **And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.** What a revelation do these words present of the local giving place to the universal, the outward to the inward, the material to the spiritual! There could indeed be no spot more holy than another where all was holy, none purer than another where all was pure. God Himself and the Lamb in whom He is revealed to men sanctified every spot of ground within the city by their immediate presence. The inhabitants dwelt as if continually in the temple 'praising God.'

Ver. 23. As the city was independent of the outward and ordinary means of grace, so also it was independent of the outward influences which nature supplies for the help of man. It **hath no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine upon it.** In our present condition all nature is sacramental to the believing eye or ear. All tells of the supernatural behind nature. But now the shadows flee away, and God and the Lamb revealing God lighten the city with their immediate light. The **glory of God** spoken of is again the Shechinah, the visible symbol of His presence.—**The Lamb is the lamp thereof.** It may seem as if mention of the 'lamp' detracted

from the loftiness of the imagery; but, when there is neither sun nor moon, we naturally think of the lamp which men use at night. May there not also be an allusion to the lamps of the Golden Candlestick of the Sanctuary?

Ver. 24. The description of the glory of the New Jerusalem is continued in figures taken from the prophets of the Old Testament (comp. Isa. lx. 2, 3). **And the nations shall walk by the light of it.** We are not required invariably to understand the heathen by the word 'nations,' or the faithful of the Old Covenant by the word 'people.' It appears from John xi. 50-52 (see note there) that there is a sense in which the theocratic people are a 'nation,' and the heathen gathered into the flock of Christ a part of His 'people.' In ver. 3 of this very chapter, too, we have read of a time when God shall dwell with men, and they shall be 'His peoples.' The two terms 'nation' and 'people' may, therefore, be applied to the same persons viewed in different aspects. The 'peoples' of ver. 3 are the 'nations' of this verse and of chap. xxii. 2; and the choice of the different expressions is probably determined by the consideration that in the one God is thought of as 'tabernacling' in the midst of His people, in the other as being His people's 'light' (comp. note on chap. i. 20, where we have a remarkable parallel both in thought and structure). The 'nations' are not converted heathen alone, but all who, whether Jew or Gentile, walk in the light.—**And the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it.** Not the masses of the nations only, but their highest representatives and dignitaries submit themselves with all that they have to the sway of Him who now rules in righteousness, the universal King.

Ver. 25. **And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there.** The design of the words is to set forth the perfect peace and security of the inhabitants of the heavenly city. How often had the gates of an ancient city to be closed, always by night, often by day! How often had measures of precaution to be taken against apprehended danger! Here there is no danger, no apprehension, no enemy to approach the gate, but happiness perfect and for ever undisturbed. The explanation of the last clause of the verse, beginning as it does with the word 'for,' has afforded some cause of perplexity to interpreters. Yet the explanation generally given is satisfactory. In Isa. lx. 11 the prophet, speaking of the future city of God, had said, 'Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night.' St. John is referring to that passage, but he could not adopt it as it stood, and he would explain why he stopped short at the word 'day' of the prophet. He could not bring the thought of 'night' into connection with the New Jerusalem, for there was 'no night there.' There may have been something more in his thoughts. We know from John xiii. 30 the symbolical meaning which he attached to the word 'night.' 'It was night' when Judas went out upon his errand of treachery and crime. The first clause of the verse contains the emblem of security and peace. The second assigns the reason why these shall continue undisturbed. There shall be no night there, no darkness either physical or moral, neither men nor deeds that shun the light.

Ver. 26. **And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.** Such shall be the use made of the open gates. The nations shall stream into the city with their gifts, to lay their best upon its altars, and to enjoy in turn its rest and peace and security and light. The New Jerusalem receives freely, and possesses for ever, the glory and honour of the kings of the earth. She receives without seeking it all that Babylon had become a harlot to obtain, and could not keep.

Ver. 27. For these purposes alone shall the open gates be used. **There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie.** There is indeed now nothing unclean; there is no wilful sinner of any kind to enter. All the enemies of God have been overcome: all sin has been banished for ever.—**But they only which are written in the Lamb's book of life.** Such alone are found upon the earth; and, as we lift our eyes to the city, we behold them flocking in from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, their toilsome pilgrimage closed, their hard struggle ended, their glory come.

CHAPTER XXII. 1-5.

The New Jerusalem (continued).

1 AND he showed me a pure[1] [a]river of water of life, clear[2] as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of
2 the Lamb.[3] In[4] the midst of the [b]street of it,[5] and[6] on either side of the river, *was there*[7] the [c]tree of life, which[8] bare twelve *manner*[9] *of* fruits, *and*[10] yielded[11] her fruit every month: and the [d]leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the

[a] Gen. ii. 10; Ps. xlvi. 4; Ezek. xlvii. 1-12.
[b] Ch. xxi. 21.
[c] Gen. ii. 9.
[d] Jer. viii. 22

[1] *omit* pure
[2] bright
[3] Lamb,
[4] in
[5] of it.
[6] And
[7] omit *there*
[8] *omit* which
[9] bearing twelve harvests
[10] omit *and*
[11] yielding

3 nations. And there shall be no more curse: [12] but [13] the throne
of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall
4 [e] serve him: [14] and they shall [f] see his face; and his name
5 *shall be* in [15] their [g] foreheads. And there shall be no [h] night
there; [16] and they need no candle, [17] neither light of the [18] sun;
for the Lord God giveth [19] them [i] light: and they shall reign
for ever and ever.

[e] Ch. i. 6. [f] Mat. v. 8. [g] Ch. xiv. 1. [h] Ch. xxi. 25. [i] Isa. lx. 19.

[12] anything accursed [13] and [14] do him service [15] on
[16] shall be night no more [17] light of lamp [18] *omit* the [19] shall give

CONTENTS. These verses bring to a close the description of the New Jerusalem, and it is unfortunate that, in our Authorised Version, they should have been separated as they are from the parts of the same description contained in chap. xxi. The verses are framed with an obvious reference to the Paradise of Gen. i. ii.

Ver. 1. **And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.** No scenery is complete without water; and more especially to the Jew, accustomed to a burning climate and a thirsty land, water was the constant symbol of all that was refreshing and quickening to men. The joy of the heavenly city could not, therefore, be perfect without it, 'There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High' (Ps. xlvi. 4; comp. also Ezek. xlvii. 1–12). The river here spoken of corresponds to that of Gen. ii. 10, but it is a still brighter stream. It comes 'out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,' out of the highest and most blessed of all sources, God Himself, our God, revealed to us in His Son in whom He is well pleased. The waters are those of peace and spiritual life: Jerusalem's 'peace is like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream' (Isa. lxvi. 12). Not only so; the waters are 'bright as crystal,' of sparkling purity and clearness.

Ver. 2. **In the midst of the street of it.** These words are best connected with the words immediately preceding, and they thus describe the course of the river. We are again, as in chap. xxi. 21, to understand the word 'street' generically, so that the picture presented to us is that of a clear stream flowing down the middle of each street of the city, bordered with trees on either side. Yet these trees are one tree.—**And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve harvests of fruits, yielding her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.** The idea of the 'tree of life' is no doubt taken from Gen. ii. 9. It grows on either side of the river, nourished by its waters and shading its banks. Interpreters differ as to the meaning of the second clause of the verse, some preferring the rendering given above, others that of the Authorised Version, 'twelve manner of fruits.' A good sense may be obtained from the latter interpretation, which will point us to the variety, ever new, of the enjoyments provided for the inhabitants of the city. But the former interpretation appears to be preferable. It is almost demanded by the third clause of the verse, 'yielding her fruit every month,' which carries our thoughts much more to the same fruit produced every month than to twelve successive varieties of fruit. Besides this, the general idea of the passage is rather that of continuous nourishment than of variety of blessings. Finally, the thought has direct reference to that upon which the believer lives, and this is always one and the same: 'Christ' liveth in us (comp. chap. ii. 7). It is unnecessary to say that the number twelve is not to be understood literally. The supply of fruit, at once for the nourishment and the delectation of the saints, never fails.—In the last clause of the verse it is not implied that any inhabitants of the new earth stand in need of healing. For the same reason it is impossible to think that 'the nations' here spoken of have yet to be converted. They have already entered that better world to which the old world has given place. That they are 'healed' can signify no more than this, that they are kept in constant soundness of health by what is there administered to them. As we must persevere throughout eternity in faith, so also shall we persevere in health (comp. on John xx. 31). 'The nations' we have already seen to be full partakers of all the blessings of the city (chap. xxi. 24). They include Jewish as well as Gentile Christians, and the importance of both classes, not the inferiority of either, is the leading thought.

Ver. 3. **And there shall be no more anything accursed,** anything upon which the curse of the Almighty rests, and fit only to be cast out of His presence.—**And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.** What throne is this? The three clauses that follow appear to show that it is the throne of God in the innermost recess of His sanctuary. The 'throne' therefore is not concealed. The redeemed have constant access to it.—**And his servants shall do him service.** They shall perform their priestly functions for ever in His presence.

Ver. 4. **And they shall see his face.** It had been said to Moses by the Almighty, 'Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see Me, and live' (Ex. xxxiii. 20). But the blessing denied to the great leader of the hosts of Israel is granted to those who are taken up into the Mount with God. He is revealed to them in the Son, and they shall 'see Him even as He is' (1 John iii. 2). The beatific vision of the pure in heart is that 'they shall see God' (Matt. v. 8).—**And his name shall be on their foreheads.** The name referred to is that of God and of the Lamb. As the high priest of old wore upon his forehead a plate of gold with the name of Jehovah inscribed upon it, so the redeemed, now all high

priests in the sanctuary, shall wear the same name upon their foreheads. Nothing is said of the golden plate. The name is written upon the forehead itself.

Ver. 5. **And there shall be night no more.** We have already had a similar statement in chap. xxi. 25, but it is now repeated in a different connection and with a different purpose. Then it was to indicate that the gates of the city shall be continually open, so that the redeemed may continually enter with their gifts in order to magnify its King. Now it is to show that, having entered, they shall suffer no interruption in their joyful service, and shall need no nightly rest to recruit the weary frame for the service of the following day. They shall be always strong and vigorous for the service of their Lord.—**And they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun, for the Lord God shall give them light.** Did they need light of lamp or sun, it would show that they were still amidst the changes of this fleeting scene, for the lamp wastes as it burns, and the sun hastens daily to his setting. But He who is 'without variableness or shadow cast by turning' is now their light, and that light never fades. As their frame never wearies for service, so the conditions necessary for the accomplishment of that service never fail.—**And they shall reign for ever and ever.** The transition is sudden, almost startling, for we have been reading only of 'service.' Yet it is eminently characteristic of St. John, who constantly delights at the close of a passage to return to his earlier steps, and to close as he had begun. He has reached the consummation of the happiness of the saints of God, and of what can it remind him but of his very earliest words, words too the echo of which has run through the whole of the Apocalypse, 'And he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father' (chap. i. 6)? It is true that the redeemed are priests, but they are more than priests. He with whom they are one is a 'priest after the order of Melchizedek,' both priest and king. In like manner they are both priests and kings; they 'sit down with their Lord in His throne, even as He also overcame, and sat down with His Father in His throne' (chap. iii. 21). They share the Divine authority over all things around them, and their authority is without interruption and without end. They reign 'for ever and ever.'

CHAPTER XXII. 6–21.

The Epilogue.

6 AND he said unto me, These sayings[1] *are* faithful and true:
and the Lord God of the holy [a]prophets[2] sent his angel [a] Ch. i. 4.
to show unto his servants the things which must [b]shortly be [b] Ch. i. 1.
7 done.[3] Behold,[4] I come quickly: [c]blessed *is* he that keepeth [c] Ch. i. 3.
8 the sayings[1] of the prophecy of this book. And I [d]John saw [d] Ch. i. 4.
these things, and heard *them*.[5] And when I had heard and
seen,[6] I [e]fell down to worship before the feet of the angel [e] Cp. ch. i. 17
9 which showed me these things. Then saith he[7] unto me, See
thou do it not: for[8] I am thy [f]fellow-servant,[9] and of[10] thy [f] Ch. i. 1.
brethren the prophets, and of[10] them which keep the sayings[1]
10 of this book: worship God. And he saith unto me, [g]Seal [g] Ch. i. 19; Dan. xii. 4.
not[11] the sayings[1] of the prophecy of this book: for the [h]time [h] Ch. i. 3.
11 is at hand. He that is unjust,[12] let him be unjust[13] still: and
he which[14] is filthy, let him be[15] filthy still: and[16] he that is
righteous, let him be righteous[17] still: and he that is holy, let
12 him be[15] holy still. And,[18] behold, I [i]come quickly; and my [i] Ch. i. 7.
reward *is* with me, to give[19] every man according as his work
13 shall be.[20] I am[21] [k]Alpha and [21]Omega, the beginning and [k] Ch. i. 8.

[1] words [2] and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets,
[3] shortly come to pass [4] And behold
[5] And I John am he that heard and saw these things [6] I heard and saw
[7] And he saith [8] *omit* for [9] a fellow-servant with thee
[10] with [11] *add* up [12] unrighteous
[13] do unrighteousness [14] that [15] *add* made [16] *omit* and
[17] do righteousness [18] *omit* And [19] render to [20] is [21] *add* the

14 the end, the first and the last.[22] Blessed *are* they that [t] do his [t] Ch. i. 3.
commandments,[23] that they may have right[24] to the [u] tree of [u] Ch. ii. 7.
life, and may [x] enter in through[25] the gates into the city. [x] Ch. xxi. 25. Cp. Gen. iii. 24.
15 For[26] without *are*[27] dogs, and[27] sorcerers, and[27] whoremongers,[28]
and[27] murderers, and[27] idolaters, and whosoever loveth and
16 maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine [y] angel to testify unto [y] Ch. i. 1.
you these things in[29] the churches. I am the [z] root and the [z] Isa. xi. 10.
offspring of David, *and*[30] the bright and[31] morning [a] star. [a] Cp. ch. i. 16.
17 And the Spirit and the [b] bride say, Come. And let him that [b] Ch. xxi. 9.
heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And[32]
18 whosoever will,[33] let him take the [c] water of life freely. For[34] [c] Isa. lv. 1.
I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall [d] add unto these[35] things,[36] [d] Prov. xxx. 6.
God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this
19 book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the
[e] book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out[37] [e] Ch. i. 3.
of[38] the book of life, and out of the holy city, and[39] *from*[40] the
20 things which are written in this book. He which testifieth
these things saith, [f] Surely[41] I come quickly. Amen.[42] Even [f] Ch. i. 7.
21 so,[43] come, Lord Jesus. The [g] grace of our[44] Lord Jesus [g] Ch. i. 4.
Christ[45] *be* with you all.[46] Amen.

[22] the first and the last, the beginning and the end
[23] that wash their robes [24] the right [25] by [26] *omit* For
[27] *add* the [28] fornicators [29] for [30] omit *and*
[31] the [32] *omit* And [33] he that will [34] *omit* For [35] them
[36] *omit* things [37] *omit* out [38] from [39] even
[40] omit *from* [41] Yea: [42] Amen: [43] *omit* Even so
[44] the [45] *omit* Christ [46] with the saints

CONTENTS. The Apocalypse began with a Prologue. As in the case of the Fourth Gospel, it now ends with a corresponding Epilogue, in which the great importance of all the revelations it had contained is again set before us, and we are urged anew to the acceptance of the blessings and an avoidance of the plagues of which it speaks. At the same time various particulars of the Prologue are taken up, and the whole book is presented to us in its compact unity.

Ver. 6. **And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true** (comp. on chap. xxi. 5). There is no ground to think that we have here a recapitulation by St. John himself of the things that had been spoken to him. We hear rather the words of the angel who has been throughout the whole book the medium by which the revelations contained in it have been communicated. Nor are we to confine the 'words' to which reference is made to those connected with the vision of the New Jerusalem. They refer, as appears especially from ver. 7, to all the visions of the book.—**And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass.** It is doubtful whether by the expression 'the spirits of the prophets' we are to understand the spirits of the prophets themselves, which belong to God and which He uses for His own purposes, or the Spirit of God, that Spirit by which of old 'men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Pet. i. 21). The latter appears to be the true interpretation, for it directs us more immediately to that Divine inspiration to which it is the object of the Seer to trace all the revelations which he had enjoyed, and it connects us more closely with that Prologue of the book which is at present in his mind. In chap. i. 4 we have read of the 'seven Spirits which are before His throne,' that is, of the one Spirit of God in the completeness and manifoldness of His gifts. Here, in like manner, we are led to think of the varied gifts of prophetic power with which God had been pleased to endow the commissioned servants of His will. The things revealed in this instance were those already spoken of in chap. i. 1, where the same words are employed to describe them. It is curious to find the word 'servants' in this verse, when in chap. i. 1 we had only one servant spoken of. Yet we cannot suppose that under the plural form are included those Christians for whose behoof the revelations had been given. It can only include those to whom they had been made. Perhaps the explanation may be that, as 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy' (chap. xix. 10), St. John here unites with himself the prophets of God in all past ages. All of them, though 'in divers portions and by

divers manners' (Heb. i. 1), had had one revelation to proclaim; and, although that revelation had now reached a fulness which it had not previously attained, the last stage in the unfolding of God's will was only the completing of what had gone before.

Ver. 7. **And behold, I come quickly.** The Lord Himself is introduced as the speaker, as He at once summarises the contents of the book, and presents to His Church that theme which was her encouragement and hope amidst all her troubles. The words are not to be regarded as those of the angel. They are rather a parenthesis on the part of St. John himself, as he lovingly recalls the thought that was to him the chief spring of life and joy.—**Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.** After the parenthesis the words of the angel are resumed. It is true, that at the time when they were uttered the book had not been written. But the command had been given that it should be written (chap. i. 19), and the task might easily be viewed as already accomplished. The book indeed was but a transcript of those eternal verities which had been written in the counsels of God from before the foundation of the world (comp. on chap. xxi. 5). The word 'keepeth' is a favourite one with the Apostle. It is not enough to hear or to enjoy. The Son 'kept' the Father's commandments, and it is the test of the love of believers, 'If ye love Me, ye will keep **My** commandments' (John xiv. 15).

Ver. 8. **And I, John, am he that heard and saw these things.** Once more, as at chap. i. 1, 4, the Seer names himself, thus again binding together the opening and closing paragraphs of his book,—a clear proof that by the words 'these things' we are to understand the contents of the whole book and not merely those of its latest section. On the importance of seeing and hearing, comp. 1 John i. 1, 2.—**And when I heard and saw I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.** Once before, at chap. xix. 10, he had done the same thing, and had been corrected for it. We need not wonder that he should do it again; nor is it necessary to think that, having just heard the words 'Behold, I come quickly,' he may have been doubtful whether the angel before him was the Lord Himself or not. Such had been the glory of the revelations that a mistake of this kind might easily be made more than once. But, whenever made, it was needful that it should be pointed out.

Ver. 9. The angel forbids the worship that would have been paid him, and adds, **I am a fellow-servant with thee, and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God.** Before God alone must all His creatures bow. All are only His 'servants,' and it is their duty to encourage one another in their mutual service. It is needless to say that distinctions of office are not here denied; but there is something deeper than office in which Christians are one.

Ver. 10. **And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.** At chap. i. 19 St. John had been commanded to 'write,' now he is commanded to proclaim what he had written. The Apocalypse was not to be a sealed and hidden book like that of Daniel (chaps. viii. 26, xii. 4). It was to be opened for the instruction and the guidance of the Church. There was not a moment to be lost. The Lord was at hand. Let all who believed that truth prepare themselves for His coming.

Ver. 11. **He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still.** It is not possible to separate these words from the last clause of ver. 10 or from ver. 12. But the question still remains, In what sense are they to be understood? Are they a warning to the wicked as well as the good, so that the former may repent while there is time? They can hardly be looked at in this light. There is no appearance of an exhortation to the wicked to repent either in the passage before us or in any other part of the Apocalypse; and in ver. 12 'reward' only, not punishment, is spoken of. The Apocalypse is a book for the Church, although indirectly it appeals to the world. Or, do the words contain the truth that the mystery of God's dealings is finished, and that nothing more will be done by Him to lead men to change their state? This we must take to be the meaning, a meaning applicable not simply to the few moments immediately preceding the Lord's coming, but to the whole Christian era. The words contain that solemn lesson often taught in Scripture, but nowhere so impressively as in the writings of St. John, that the revelation of Christ is the final test of the character, and the final arbiter of the fate, of man. It is the revelation of that Light which appeals to the spark of light in the breast of every one. Will one listen to the appeal; will he follow that voice of his nature which bids him bring his light to the Light,—then his little spark will be kindled into a bright ever-enduring flame. Will he close himself against the light, will he, because he *loves* the darkness, refuse to admit the light,—then his darkness shall continue and deepen, and the little spark that might have been fanned into ever-increasing brightness will expire. Under the influences of the Gospel of Christ we make out our own destinies; we sow the harvest that we shall eventually reap. Such is the great moral spectacle upon which, as he surveys the history of man, the eye of St. John always rests. It is this that lends to the world its solemnity, and to the revelation that is in Christ Jesus its unspeakable importance. We need not remain unrighteous and filthy: we may not remain righteous and holy; but, whatever the changes that we experience, this is true, that we are fixing our own character and conduct every day we live, and that, if judgment overtake us at the last, the result will be traceable to no arbitrary decree, but to the manner in which, as moral beings, we met the conditions of that moral system in the midst of which we have been placed.

Ver. 12. In conformity with the general tenor of the Apocalypse, this verse is to be regarded as addressed only to the righteous. The word *reward* in it is not to be understood in a neutral sense, but as indicating what it naturally means. Every man whose *work* is pleasing to the Lord shall receive the welcome and the blessing which the faithful Lord is ready to bestow.

Ver. 13. **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.** These words confirm the statement made in the

previous verse (comp. chap. xxi. 6). They take us back also to chap. i. 8.

Ver. 14. **Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.** The thought of the blessed 'reward' that had been spoken of fills the mind of Him who is to bestow it, and He accordingly continues in this and the next following verse to enlarge upon it. Those who are to enjoy that reward are evidently conceived of as one class, the Church of Christ as a whole, not two classes, Jewish and Gentile Christians. All have 'washed their robes,' and in that respect they are one. In the two last clauses of the verse their blessedness is presented under two points of view—first, they have 'a right to,' literally, they have authority over, 'the tree of life,' so that they may eat continually of its fruit; secondly, they 'enter in by the gates into the city.' This last we might have expected to be mentioned first, for the tree of life grows within the city. But the first is the most important, and therefore receives the place of prominence. It is also possible that, as it is 'the right' to the tree of life that is spoken of, the eating of the tree may be separately viewed. The order may be—first, the right; secondly, the entering; thirdly, the eating.

Ver. 15. **Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.** These words appear to be added, not so much for the sake of telling us what shall be the fate of the sinful classes mentioned, as for the sake of enhancing by contrast that description of the blessedness of the righteous which had been given in the previous verse. The latter are within the city, separated for ever from the classes now described, the very mention of which awakens pain and horror in the mind. The word 'dogs' is a general appellative applicable to all these classes, and is to be explained by remembering the light in which such animals were regarded by the Jews (Ps. xxii. 16, 20; comp. Matt. vii. 6; Phil. iii. 2). This general appellation is then subdivided (comp. chap. xxi. 8).

Ver. 16. **I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches.** The closing message of the book begins with these words, and it comes from Him who only here, and in His words to Saul (Acts ix. 5), calls Himself by the name 'Jesus.' The word, therefore, must be understood in its most emphatic sense, the Saviour, He who saves His people from their sins and leads them in triumph to the promised rest. In the words employed by Him He first confirms what had been said in chap. i. 1, and then points out the persons to whom as well as those for whose behoof the testimony had been given. 'I have sent,' it is stated, 'unto you.' The persons thus referred to seem to be the 'angels' of the churches, not special office-bearers of any kind, but the churches in their action, in their presentation of themselves to the world in life and action. It is indeed possible that, as in ver. 6 of this chapter we found the Seer coming before us as the representative of all those there called God's 'servants,' so here we may have the plural 'you' because he is again regarded in the same light. The other explanation, however, is simpler, and finds some confirmation in the connection between so many different parts of the Prologue and the Epilogue. While thus testified to the churches in action, the things contained in this book are testified 'for the churches,' *i.e.* for the seven churches mentioned in chap. i., but considered as a representation and embodiment of the whole Church.—In the first words of this verse the Lord had described Himself as Jesus. The words which follow, **I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star,** enlarge this description, and that in the manner of those double pictures which are so common in the writings of St. John. The first picture is taken from the circle of Jewish associations, the second from the field of the world. By the 'root' of David, we are not to understand that root out of which David sprang as if, when taken along with the following words, we had here a declaration that Jesus was both the 'Lord' and the 'Son' of David (comp. Matt. xxii. 45). The 'root of David' is rather the shoot which proceeds from David after he and his house have fallen, and it only expresses in a figure what is more plainly stated in the use of the word 'offspring.' But not only so, Jesus is also 'the bright, the morning star,' the most brilliant star in the firmament of heaven, now the harbinger of that day the light of which never dims. This is the Gentile, perhaps more properly the general, portion of the figure. David's was a *local* name: the eyes of *all* nations are fixed with interest and delight upon the morning star (comp. chaps. v. 5, ii. 28).

Ver. 17. **And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. He that will, let him take the water of life freely.** It is not easy to determine exactly the bearing of the different clauses of this verse, and much diversity of opinion prevails upon the point. They are commonly regarded either as a continuation of the words of Jesus in ver. 16, or as the answer of the Church and the believing soul. Neither view is consistent with them as a whole. On the one hand, there is something unnatural in putting into the mouth of the Lord Himself those two cries addressed to Him to 'come' which are contained in the first two clauses. No other instance of the kind occurs in the Apocalypse, frequently as His Coming is there spoken of. On the other hand, it is equally unnatural to look upon the last two clauses as a response of the Church to her Lord; while, if her mind is at the moment as full as we know it to be of the Coming of Jesus, it is not easy to comprehend how she could pass so rapidly to a meaning of the word 'come' different from that which occupied all her thoughts. In these circumstances we venture to suggest that we may have here an interchange of thought and feeling between Jesus and His Church. He is coming: the Church is waiting in joyful assurance that He is at hand. Both the Lord and His Church are at a moment of highest rapture. What more natural than that at such a moment they should exchange their sentiments in the blessed fellowship of a common joy? If this be allowed, the first two clauses will be the answer of the Church to Him who has just described Himself by the glorious titles of ver. 16. The Spirit working in the Church, and teaching her to long and cry for that Coming with which all her hopes are associated, together with the Church herself, no sooner think of the testimony of Christ as ended than they can restrain themselves no

longer, and by the voice of the Church they both cry 'Come' (comp. on John xv. 26, 27). The Seer adds, in words expressing substantially the same thought, 'Let him that heareth,'—him that heareth in faith, and to whom the glorious prospects of this book are a reality,—let him cry 'Come.' Then Jesus Himself takes up the 'Come,' 'Let him that is athirst come.' We must understand these words in the same sense as that in which we have understood the similar words of chap. xxi. 6. The thirst referred to is not the first thirst of the sinner after salvation. It is the constant longing of one who has already been refreshed for deeper and fuller draughts; and to each one who so thirsts the Lord says 'Come.' So also with the last clause of the verse. The persons referred to are already believers, within the city, within reach of the water of life; and to them the Lord says, Let them take it 'freely,' without hesitation and without stint.

Vers. 18, 19. It seems best to suppose that we have the Apostle before us as the speaker in this verse. Nothing in it is stronger, or more incompatible with what we know of his meekness and humility, than are the words of chap. i. 3 to a very similar effect. Besides, we have not so much the man as the prophet before us, one who is in the Spirit, who speaks in the consciousness of his Divine commission, and to whom are imparted the boldness of his Master and His cause. For a similar command of Moses, see Deut. iv. 2, xii. 32.

Ver. 20. **He which testifieth these things saith Yea: I come quickly. Amen: Come, Lord Jesus.** The structure of this verse resembles what we have already found to be that of ver. 17, an exchange of sentiment between the Lord and the believer. Jesus Himself speaks first, testifying to that great truth of His Coming which has been the main theme of the whole revelation of this book; and adding, as suited the moment at which we have arrived, that He comes 'quickly.' To this the believer or the Church answers 'Amen,' and then adds, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' The Coming of Christ has been the source of her hope, the spring of her joy, throughout all her troubles. When she hears that it is at hand, what can she do but lift up her head and cry 'Come'?

Nothing now remains but that the Apostle, as he had begun at chap. i. 4 in epistolary form, should in like manner close. He does it with a benediction which ought to read differently from that of the Authorised Version, **The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints.** The words are in striking harmony with what we have found to be the tone and character of the whole book. It was especially intended to describe the fortunes of 'the saints;' it was written for their sakes, to encourage and strengthen them; it has now reached a point at which we behold nothing but saints in the new heavens and new earth; and its closing salutation is to them. — **Amen, so let it be.**

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